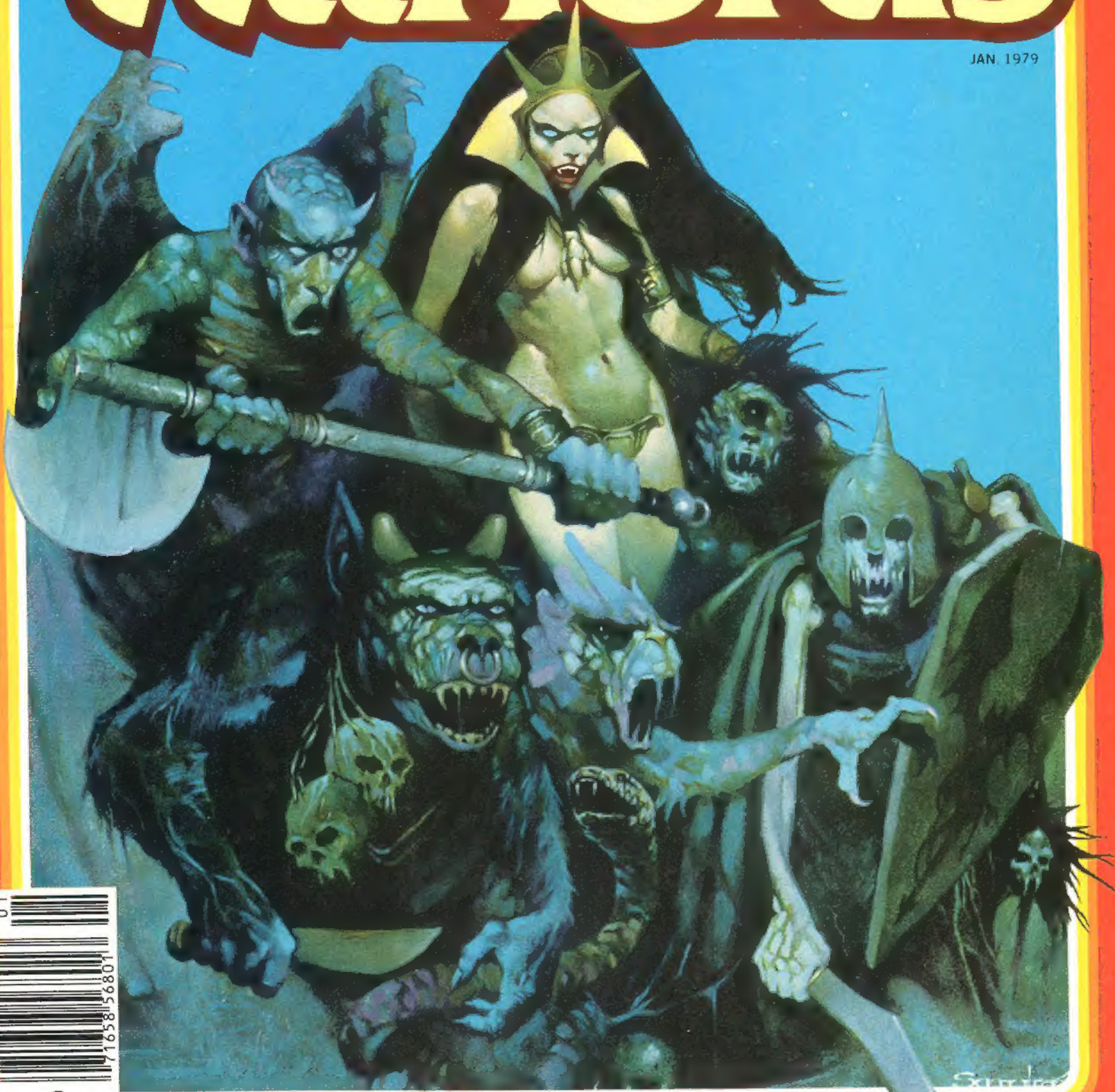


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# Ring of the Warlords

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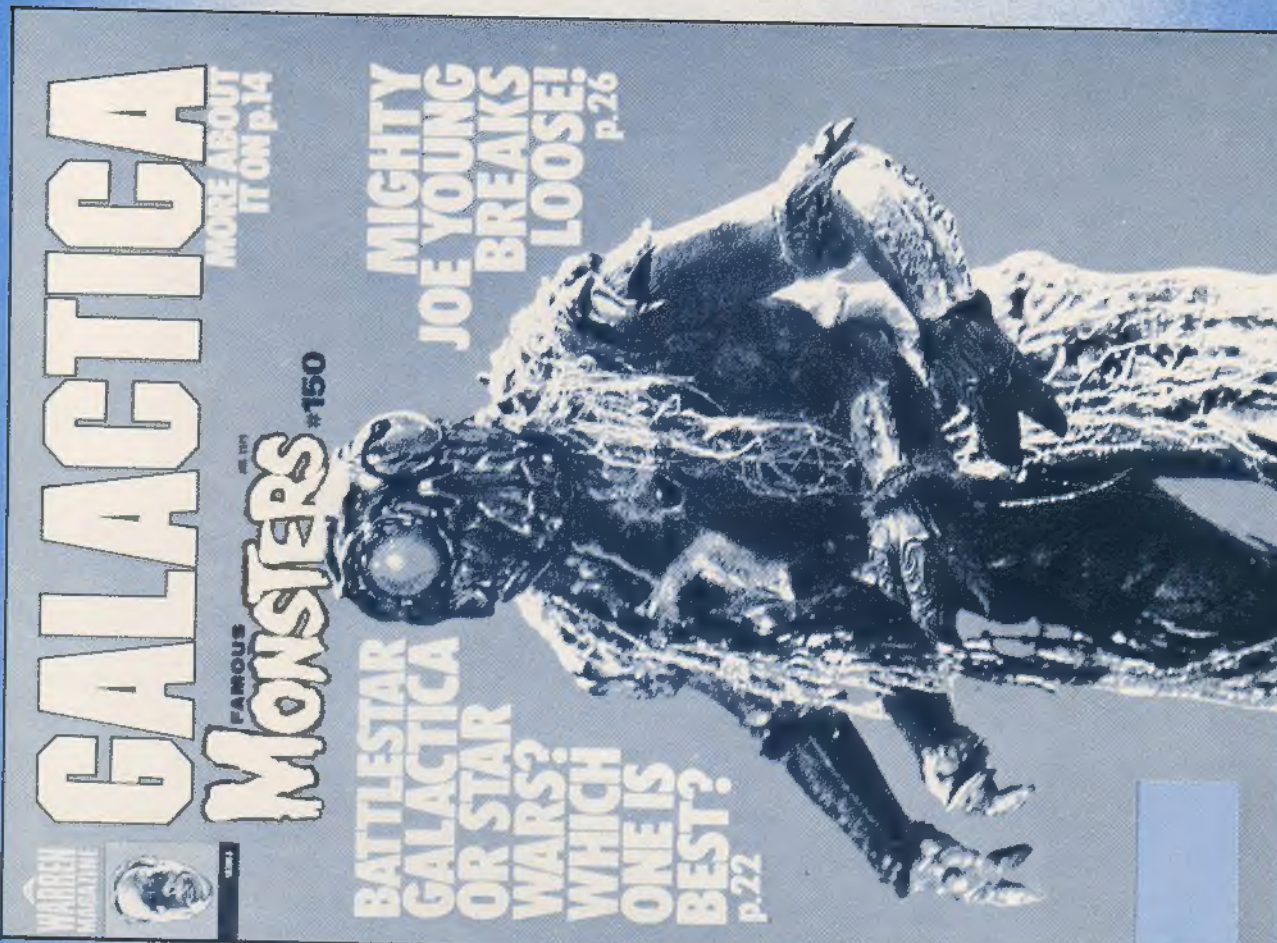
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# Ring of the Warlords



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**LEPRECHAUN KING** Jackie tried to escape the dull poverty of medieval life into a world of his own. Unfortunately the world wouldn't let him do that so he ran away. And he lived happily ever after until someone, who was barely parental, thought he should be saved!

33

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**A SECRET KING** As Rome's swank and sway fell back from the edges of the world, a tide of darkness began to sweep forward. But as the kingdom of darkness waxed there was born one who set a fire burning to last 1500 years! But first Merlin's pupil had to grow & learn!

65

**DAX THE DAMNED** Lesser gods than this have tormented the souls of man. Dax the damned is fished out of humanity's pool to swim and play among the gods. But the gods live to kill and Dax must die inch by inch as the toy of the gods plays his game.

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# THE CURSE

HE WAS AFRAID...  
THAT MUCH HE  
KNEW. AND THAT  
SOMETHING HAD  
JUST HAPPENED...  
SOMETHING  
TERRIBLE, BUT  
WHAT IT WAS  
HE DID NOT  
KNOW. HE  
DID NOT KNOW  
WHERE HE WAS  
OR HOW HE HAD  
COME TO  
BE THERE...



...IT WAS AS IF  
THIS WAS THE VERY  
FIRST MOMENT  
OF TIME... AND  
FOR HIM IT WAS,  
THERE WAS NO  
MEMORY OF YES-  
TERDAY TO GIVE  
HIM IDENTITY...

THIRSTY...

WHAT-?!  
NO!

NO! THAT  
IS NOT ME!  
IT CAN'T  
BE!





HE SOON CAME UPON A CLEARING, AND...

COME..  
I HAVE BEEN  
WAITING FOR  
YOU...

THE WOMAN LED  
HIM INSIDE, AND  
BEGAN TO PREPARE  
DINNER, AS SHE  
WORKED, SHE  
TALKED... AND AS  
SHE TALKED, HE  
BEGAN TO  
UNDERSTAND...

I AM ZARA... YOU DO  
NOT KNOW YOUR NAME?

NO, I...

BUT.. ENOUGH OF  
THAT FOR NOW... WE  
SHALL DISCUSS IT ALL  
WHEN WE HAVE  
EATEN...

THEN... SOMEONE  
HAS SOMEHOW STOLEN  
MY MEMORY... MY  
IDENTITY... AND  
TURNED ME INTO  
THIS THING-  
THAT I AM...

YES... YOU ARE  
THE VICTIM OF  
A SPELL, AN EN-  
CHANTMENT... AS  
I AM!

BUT I KNOW  
WHO IS RESPONS-  
IBLE, AND IF YOU  
WILL HELP ME,  
PERHAPS WE  
CAN DO  
SOMETHING!



WHAT IS YOUR CURSE? YOU DO NOT SEEM TO BE—

I WILL TELL YOU OF THAT WHEN IT IS TIME... BUT I KNOW THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF THE WITCH ARACHNE, WHO DWELLS NEARBY...



I MUST CALL YOU SOMETHING. HOW ABOUT ZORG? I LIKE THAT! WILL YOU HELP ME, ZORG?

BUT... WHAT CAN I DO? I AM NO WIZARD...



THE SWORD IS ENCHANTED.. IT WILL KILL A WITCH, NO MATTER WHAT MAGICAL PROTECTION SHE HAS...

I WILL ATTRACT HER WHOLE ATTENTION TO ME, AND YOU WILL STRIKE!



ALL YOU NEED FEAR IS THAT YOU WILL BEGIN TO BELIEVE IN HER ILLUSIONS, APPARITIONS... AND I CAN HELP YOU TO AVOID THAT...

VERY WELL... I WILL DO IT... LET US GO...

PRESENTLY, THEY EMERGED FROM THE FOREST...

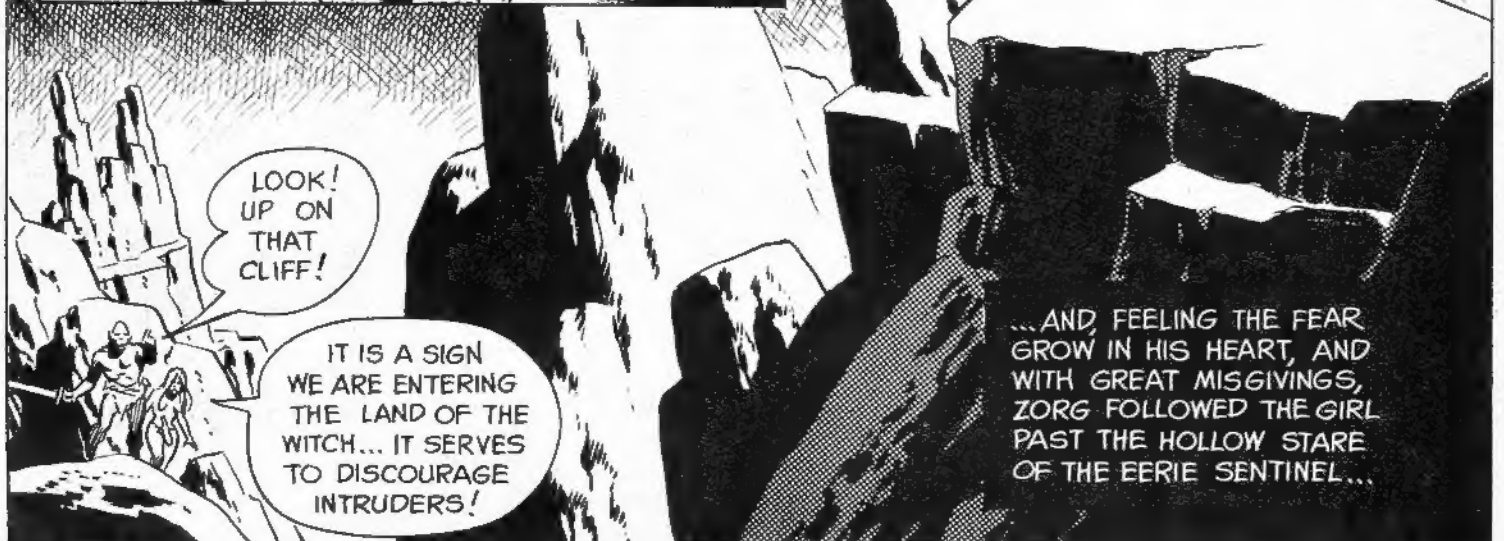


ONE MORE QUESTION, ZARA.. ARE YOU A WITCH TOO?

NO, I AM NOT... BUT I LEARNED SOMETHING OF SORCERY FROM... FROM MY MOTHER...

BUT NOW, NO MORE QUESTIONS! WE WILL SOON BE IN THE LAND OF ARACHNE.. SO BE PREPARED...

...FOR MADNESS!



LOOK! UP ON THAT CLIFF!

IT IS A SIGN WE ARE ENTERING THE LAND OF THE WITCH... IT SERVES TO DISCOURAGE INTRUDERS!

...AND, FEELING THE FEAR GROW IN HIS HEART, AND WITH GREAT MISGIVINGS, ZORG FOLLOWED THE GIRL PAST THE HOLLOW STARE OF THE EERIE SENTINEL...

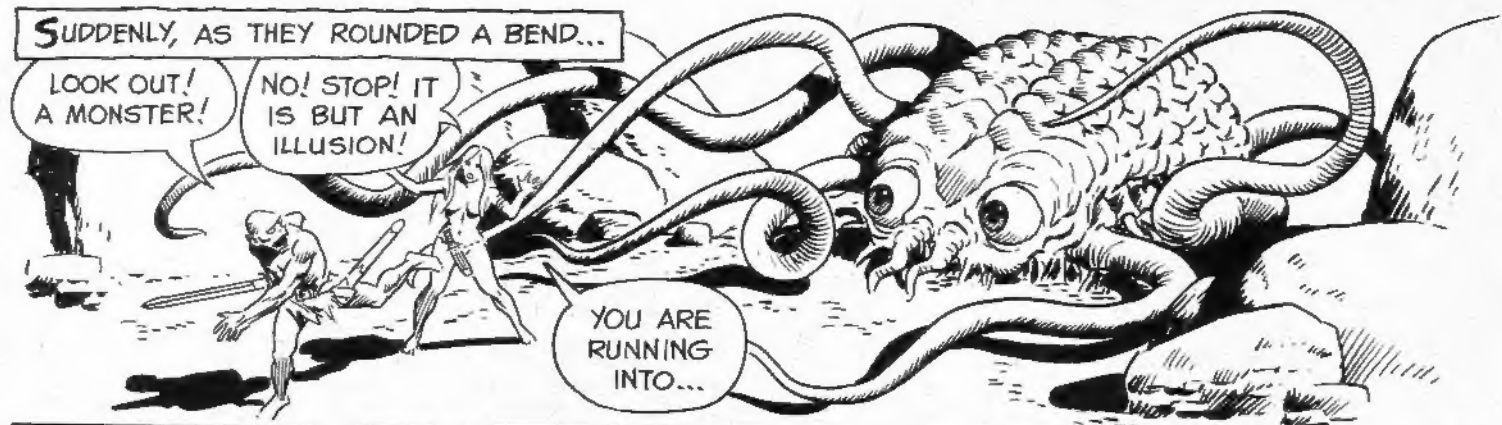


SUDDENLY, AS THEY ROUNDED A BEND...

LOOK OUT!  
A MONSTER!

NO! STOP! IT  
IS BUT AN  
ILLUSION!

YOU ARE  
RUNNING  
INTO...



THE LIVING DEAD!

THEY  
ARE REAL,  
THEN?



YES.. AND  
THEY CAN KILL  
US! THIS WAY...  
QUICK!

THEY FOUND CONCEALMENT BEHIND A BOULDER, AND  
FROM THEIR VANTAGE POINT WATCHED THE EMERGENCE  
OF A GHASTLY ARMY... AN ARMY OF THE DEAD!



ZARA INDICATED A BOULDER, AND HE PUSHED IT ASIDE...

QUICK! INTO THE TUNNEL! THEY HAVE SEEN US!

YES, ZARA... BUT I... I AM AFRAID...



EEEEEE!  
OH, FORGIVE ME, ZORG!  
I CAN BE FOOLED, TOO!

SOMETHING HAS SEIZED ME!



ZARA! I AM BEING DEVoured!

KEEP FOLLOWING ME!  
IT IS NOT REAL! REMEMBER THAT!



WE HAVE ARRIVED!  
THE MOUTH OF THE SKULL IS THE DOORWAY... AND YOU MUST GO ON AHEAD!

FOR, UNLESS I CAN MAKE MY ENTRANCE UNSEEN, WE HAVE NO CHANCE!

NOW, GO, AND PLEASE REMEMBER... YOU **MUST** HOLD HER ATTENTION UNTIL I ARRIVE!







HIS FLESH CRAWLING IN ANTICIPATION OF PAIN, HE STRODE INTO THE FLAMES...



THAT SPIDER... CAN IT BE THE WITCH?



...AND THEN THE ROOM WAS FULL OF MONSTERS, ATTACKING HIM WITH SAVAGE FRENZY FROM ALL SIDES...

HE KNEW, AND YET DID NOT KNOW, THAT HE WAS FIGHTING PHANTOMS... HE FELT PAIN AS SHARP TEETH RIPPED INTO HIS THROAT...



SUDDENLY, HIS MIND WAS CLEAR... AND HE SAW THAT THE BEAST WAS HIS OWN HAND! THEN HE REALIZED...



...IT WAS BECAUSE ZARA HAD ENTERED!



HELLO, MOTHER!

WELL, DAUGHTER! YOU HAVE COME AT LAST...



FOR A MOMENT THERE WAS ABSOLUTE SILENCE... THEN THE VERY AIR ABOUT THEM WAS RENT BY UNSEEN FORCES, AND THE SPIDER WAS NO LONGER A SPIDER, BUT A VERY OLD WOMAN...

... WHO FIXED HER EVIL GAZE UPON ZARA... A BOLT OF FORCE SEEMED TO LEAP OUT AT THE GIRL...



...AND ZARA CRUMPLED TO THE GROUND.



BUT IN THAT INSTANT, ZORG ACTED...



THEN SWORD DROPPING FROM NERVELESS FINGERS, HE TURNED TO THE FALLEN ZARA...

WE'VE DONE IT, ZARA!

ZARA! ARE... ARE YOU GOING TO... DIE?





AND THEN, AS HE CRADLED THE FALLEN SORCERESS IN HIS ARMS, SHE BEGAN TO SPEAK, IN A VOICE ALMOST INAUDIBLE...

YES... I AM DYING, ZORG... BUT DO NOT WEEP FOR ME...



I WANT TO DIE... THAT WAS PART OF MY PURPOSE IN COMING HERE! THE OTHER PART WAS TO AVENGE MYSELF ON *HER*...

BUT... NOW TAKE ME OUT OF HERE... I DO NOT WISH TO DIE IN THIS PLACE...

ZARA, I DON'T UNDERSTAND... SHE IS DEAD, BUT I AM STILL THE SAME...

THAT IS BECAUSE IT WAS *NOT* SHE WHO CAST THE SPELL UPON YOU... IT WAS I! WITH *MY DEATH* YOU WILL BE FREE!



WHAT?! YOU? BUT... I...

DON'T... PLEASE DON'T HATE ME, ZORG... I TRICKED YOU BECAUSE I COULD NOT SLAY HER MYSELF... I NEEDED SOMEONE TO DO IT WHILE I FOCUSED HER MAGIC ON ME...



FORGIVE ME... AND DO NOT WEEP... I AM MORE THAN A THOUSAND YEARS OLD, AND WEARY OF LIFE... MY CURSE WAS IMMORTALITY!

NOW *SHE* IS DEAD, AND I CAN DIE, AND ALL IS RIGHT...



ZARA!

THEN THE PAIN BEGAN, AND HE KNEW SHE WAS DEAD. SLOWLY HE RETURNED TO HIS TRUE FORM, AND IN THAT ONE LAST MOMENT OF INTELLIGENCE, HE KNEW...

AND UNDERSTOOD.



...AND HAPPILY SLITHERED OFF TO THE BOG, WHERE HIS ANXIOUS FAMILY WAITED FOR HIM.



END



"FROM 'A HISTORIE OF ANCIENT PYTH' -- BY SIR C. W. CHESTERFIELD... 'AND SO, THE DRAGON KINGS REJECTED AN *ALLIANCE* WITH THE SALS... THEIR FIERCE, COLD BLOODED COUSINS TO THE NORTH. FROM THAT DAY ON... 'TILL THE DEATH OF GWAN, THE LAST DRAGON KING, THEY REMAINED THE BITTEREST OF *ENEMIES*...' "

SO THIS IS FABLED TUCWEL... MERCHANT CAPITAL AND THE 'PEARL' OF ALL ZAMGORA!? 'PHEW'---!

FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS IT WOULD SEEM I'VE MISSED LITTLE!

NOW WHAT HAVE WE HERE? YOU'VE NICE LEGS, WENCH... WORTHY AT LEAST OF A FLAGON OF ALE AND A ROLL IN THE...

OH, NO---!

...HEY--!  
C-CAREFUL, CHILD... IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE LOSS SHOULD YOUR KNIFE HAND SLIP!

YOU'VE SPUNK, GIRL, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT! AND WELL YOU DO! TUCWEL LIES RICH IN DANGER FOR THE UNWARY!

AYE, THAT'S THE TRUTH RIGHT ENOUGH... IF EVER TRUTH BE SPOKEN...

...BUT IT'S ALSO RICH WITH PLUNDER... AND THAT'S WHAT INTERESTS ME!





MOANNNNN

EH--?  
I THOUGHT I  
HEARD A...

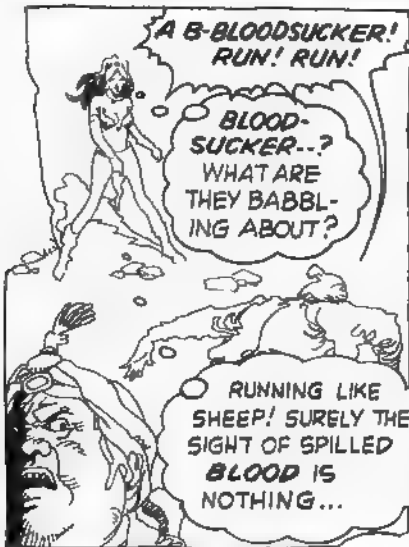


MORC TAKE  
ME FOR A FOOL!



STILL,  
I'VE SEEN  
BETTER  
IN MY  
TIME!

'PRAAGH--!



A B-BLOODSUCKER!  
RUN! RUN!

BLOOD-  
SUCKER--?  
WHAT ARE  
THEY BABBL-  
ING ABOUT?

RUNNING LIKE  
SHEEP! SURELY THE  
SIGHT OF SPILLED  
BLOOD IS  
NOTHING...



...N-NEW?!



MORC BE  
DAMNNED!

HE PULLS THE  
SWORD FROM HIS  
CHEST!



A V-VAMPIRE!  
THAT'S WHY THE  
OTHERS HAVE FLED!

SNAP

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA



G-GODS... 'GASP'...  
SUCH INHUMAN... **STRENGTH**  
...CRUSHING... ME! YET I  
WILL NOT YIELD! I'M  
LYSSALYN OF SMOTH...  
A **W-WARRIOR**...A...  
WAR...



YORRRR!

WHOOSH



A... A BOLT OF  
FIRE THAT LITERALLY  
DESTROYED THE BLOOD-  
SUCKER BUT NEVER  
TOUCHED ME--!? WHAT  
MANNER OF DARK  
SORCERY IS THIS?

FLAP  
FLAP



# The Last DRAGON KING



...?

FRUFF

SHE IS THE  
ONE WE SEEK!

"AND THAT, SON, IS HOW I MET YOUR FATHER...!"





MY FATHER!  
MOTHER HAS TOLD  
ME OF HIM MANY  
TIMES!



A-AND I STILL  
REMEMBER HOW  
HE DIED...  
PROTECTING  
US...

"...FROM THE SALS..."

AN AMBUSH!  
LYSSA! HURRY...  
GET OUR SON TO  
THE SAFETY OF  
THE CASTLE!

M-MY LORD...  
I-I CAN'T  
LEAVE...

THE BOY!  
HE MUSSSSST  
NOT ESSSSCAPE!

YOU  
HAVE  
NO  
CHOICE!

YES...DRUDD...AS  
WELL I KNOW! QUICKLY,  
GWAN!

IF...IF GWAN  
DIES, SO TOO DIE  
THE DRAGON KINGS, FOR  
HE IS THE LAST...AS  
WELL YOU KNOW!

KATHANG

FATHER!  
NO!

AND SOON, DEEP  
WITHIN THE  
CASTLE...

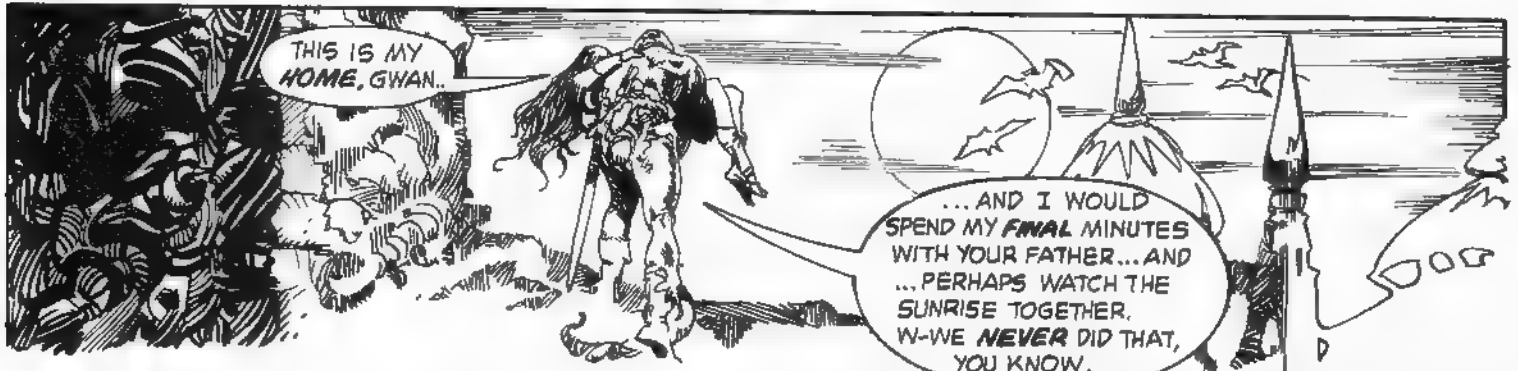
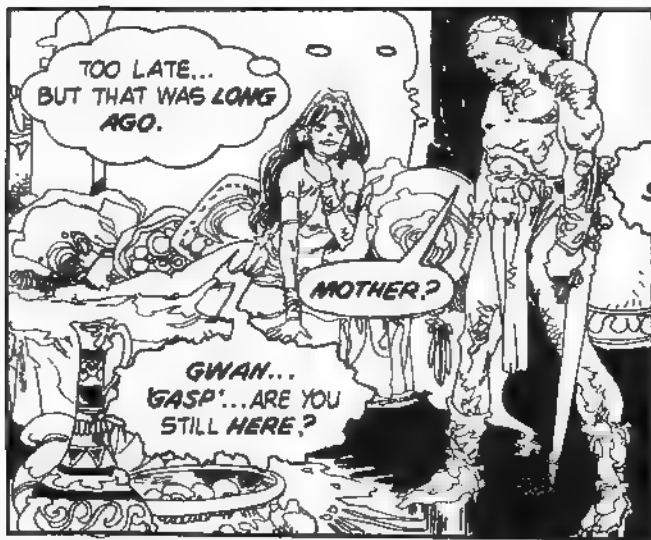
Y-YOU STAY HERE,  
GWAN! I MUST HURRY  
TO YOUR FATHER!

'SNIF'...!

CRASH











THE KILLING WILL  
END HERE, MONSTER...

SWOP



...WITH YOUR  
DEATH!

I'LL KILL YOU  
ALL!

SHKKK

SSSSS



WILL YOU,  
SSSTRIPLING? WE  
ARE MANY?



GWAN! RUN...YOU  
CAN STILL ESCAPE! I  
MAY BE OLD, BUT I CAN  
STILL DEFEND MYSELF!



ALWAYS... YOUR KIND FOUGHT  
US... REFUSSED AN  
ALLIANCE THAT WOULD HAVE  
INSURED US... MASTERY  
OVER HUMANS...

CHOK



... BUT NOW YOU  
FIGHT NO MORE! NOW  
WE...

SCHUK

AARGHH!

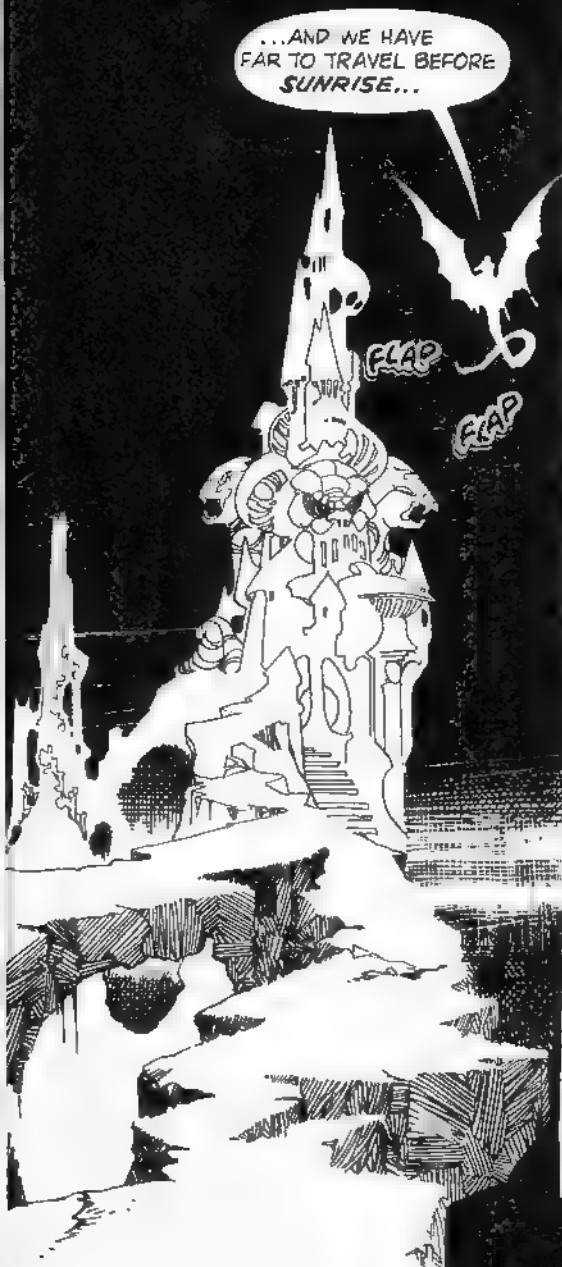


...SSSSHHHH!



M-MOTHER... I... I'M  
SORRY... DYING... NO  
OTHERS LEFT...

GWAN... 'SOB'... NO...  
I CAN'T... WON'T LET YOU  
DIE! I WON'T!



BUT THERE IS **MUCH**, STILL, TO BE DONE AND I ..I AM THE **LAST DRAGON KING**...

"... **DIFFERENT** NOW, BECAUSE OF MOTHER...AND THE **BLOODSUCKER** THAT ATTACKED HER.. AND CHANGED HER... MANY YEARS BEFORE...



"... BUT I WONDER, SYMMR, WILL I FIND THE **BLOOD** OF THE **SALS** QUITE AS WARMING AS THE **MORNING SUN**? I WONDER?"

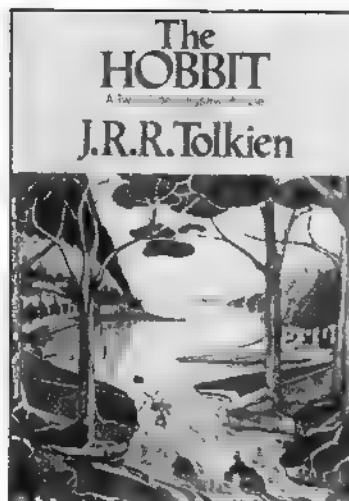


From the Games of MIDDLE EARTH  
**WAR OF THE RING**  
 THE LORD OF THE RINGS

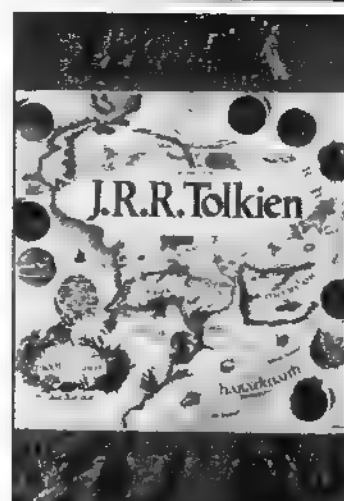


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**LORD of the  
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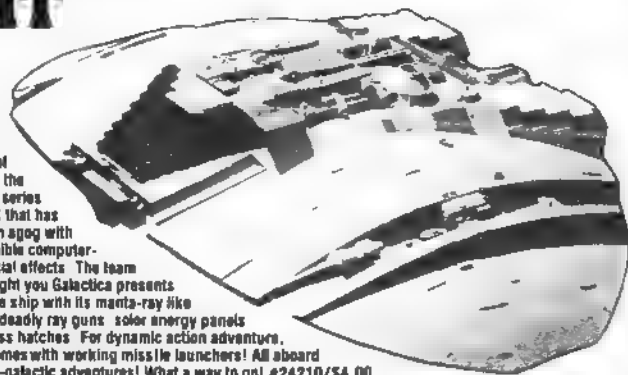


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 KIT**

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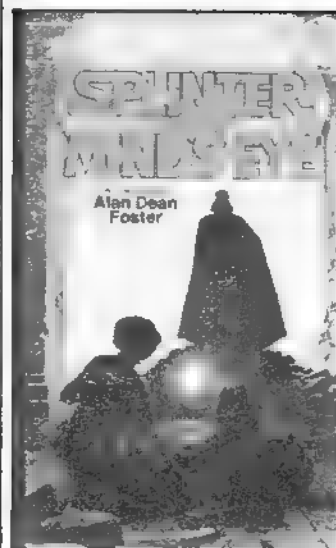
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# PROLOGUE

JACKIE PAPER WAS AN **ADVENTURER**, A **SWORDSMAN**, AN **ARCHER**, A **PRINCE** AND A **HERO**. HIS FATHER WAS KING, WEALTHY BEYOND MEASURE. HIS TUTORS WERE THE BRAVEST KNIGHTS IN HIS FATHER'S COURT. HIS FRIENDS WERE THE CHILDREN OF NOBLE MEN AND GENTLE WOMEN.

JACKIE PAPER WAS NO DIFFERENT FROM ANY CHILD SEEKING THE WARMING COMFORTS OF **FANTASY** TO ESCAPE THE COLD INDIFFERENCE OF **REALITY**. HE WAS A **DREAMER**.



JACKIE **NEEDED** HIS DREAMS. THEY WERE HIS WHITE STALLION. HIS ESCAPE FROM POVERTY, HUNGER, AND HIS FATHER'S **HARD BOOT**.



JACKIE **KNEW** THERE WAS LITTLE **DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN HIS FATHER AND HIM. WHERE JACKIE FLED INTO MIND-NUMBING **FANTASY**, HIS FATHER HID FROM THE WORLD WITHIN A STUPEFYING FLASK OF **CHEAP GROC**.



JACKIE REALIZED THAT SOMEDAY, HE TOO WOULD HAVE TO DON THAT CYNICALLY HARSH MANTLE OF MANHOOD. HIS DREAMS WOULD DRIFT INTO THE NOTHINGNESS FROM WHENCE THEY CAME...AND HIS LIFE WOULD FOLLOW THE **SAME** PATH OF DRUDGERY HIS FATHER'S HAD TAKEN.

AND HE, TOO, WOULD TURN TO DROWNING HIS TROUBLES IN AN ALCOHOLIC **STUPOR**.



YET, JACKIE UNDERSTOOD THAT HIS LIFE WAS HIS **OWN**. OVER YONDER HILL AWAITED HIS KINGDOM. HIS PRINCESS. HIS LIFE AS AN ADVENTURER AND A HERO. WHILE **HERE...** WITH HIS FATHER...HE HAD ONLY A LIFE OF **MYSERY** AND **HARDSHIP** LEERING AT HIM.





# JACKIE AND THE LEPRECHAUN KING

JACKIE HAD LIVED THROUGH **EIGHT** HOT, DEAD, HUNGRY SUMMERS WHEN HE DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO STRIKE OUT AND SEEK HIS FORTUNE.

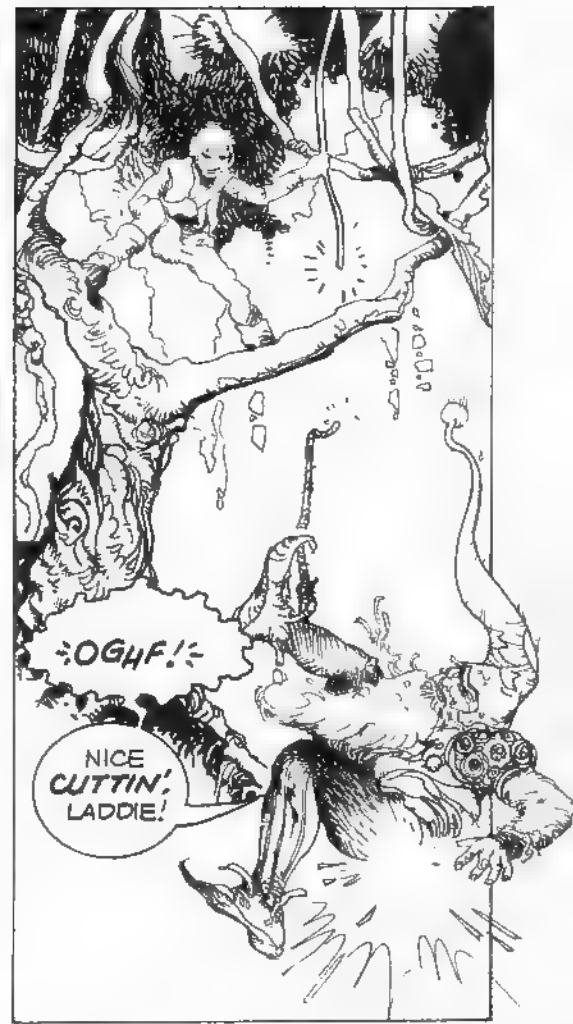


HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT AWAITED HIM OVER THE NEXT HILL. HE KNEW ONLY THAT **WHATEVER** LURKED THERE, HE WOULD GREET IT WITH WELCOMING ARMS AND A HEARTY SMILE. FOR JACKIE KNEW...EVEN IF **DEATH** AWAITED HIM, IT WOULD BE A MORE PLEASANT FATE THAN THAT WHICH HE HAD LEFT **BEHIND**.



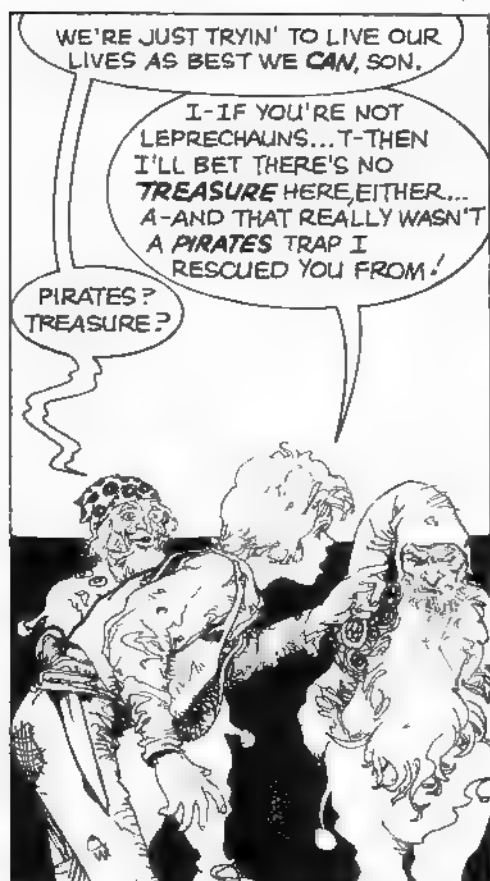
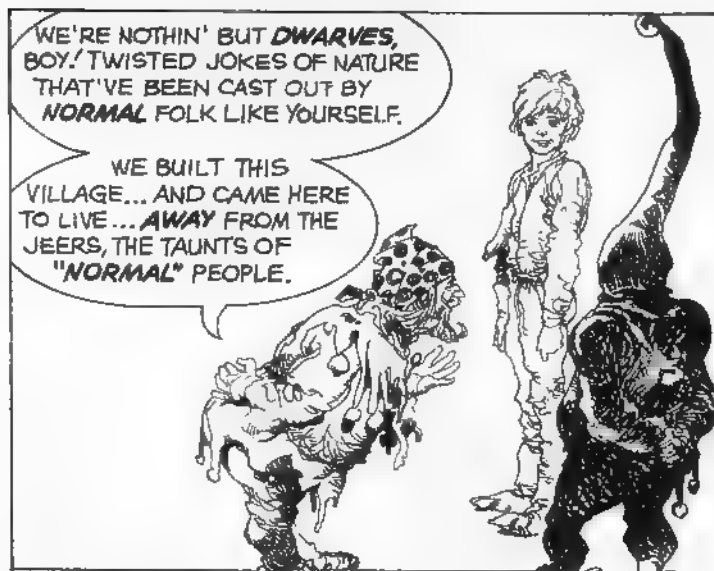
JACKIE FOUND HIS FATE...AND **ADVENTURE** ON THE VERY FIRST DAY OF HIS NEW LIFE.













SO, WITH EIGHT LONG SUMMERS UNDER HIS BELT, JACKIE SETTLED INTO HIS NEW LIFE WITH BUBBA, CHAUNCEY AND THE OTHER DWARVES.

LEPRECHAUN KING OR FRAUD, JACKIE SOON DISCOVERED THAT BUBBA COULD BE **ANYTHING** HE DESIRED. JACKIE LEARNED, TOO, THAT HE HAD THE **SAME** MAGICAL POWERS OF IMAGINATION. AND TOGETHER, HE AND BUBBA SHARED THE HAPPIEST OF TIMES... BATTLING PIRATES FIGHTING RAIDERS, AND LEADING THEIR ARMIES INTO WAR WITH THE MAGICAL DRAGON, FLUFF.



WHILE BACK IN THE VILLAGE, JACKIE'S FATHER GREW OLDER UNDER THE STRAIN OF DREARY DAILY TOIL... COUPLED WITH THE WORRY OVER HIS LOST, **LOVED** SON.

IT'S BEEN **WEEKS**, ROBBY! WHERE COULD HE **BE**? WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO MY **BOY**?



H-HE'S ALL I HAVE! S-SINCE HIS MOTHER DIED... IT AIN'T BEEN **EASY** FOR US. AND NOW...

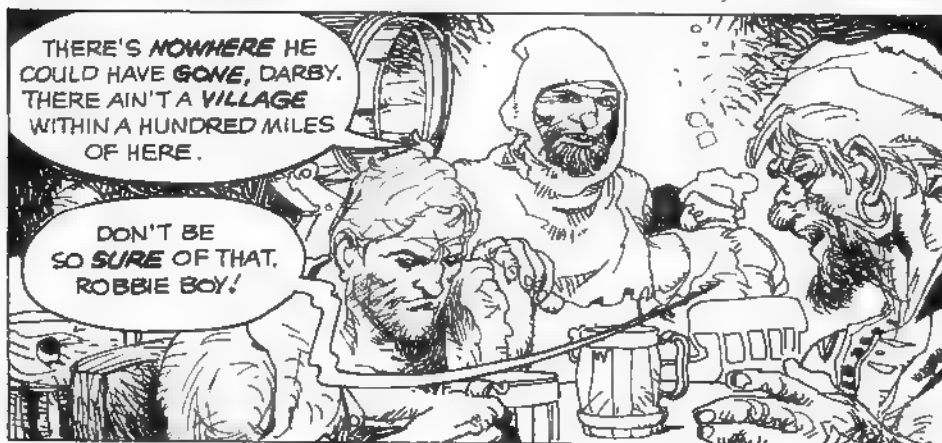
...NOW...!

WHO COULD HAVE **STOLEN** HIM FROM ME?



THERE'S **NOWHERE** HE COULD HAVE **GONE**, DARBY. THERE AIN'T A **VILLAGE** WITHIN A HUNDRED MILES OF HERE.

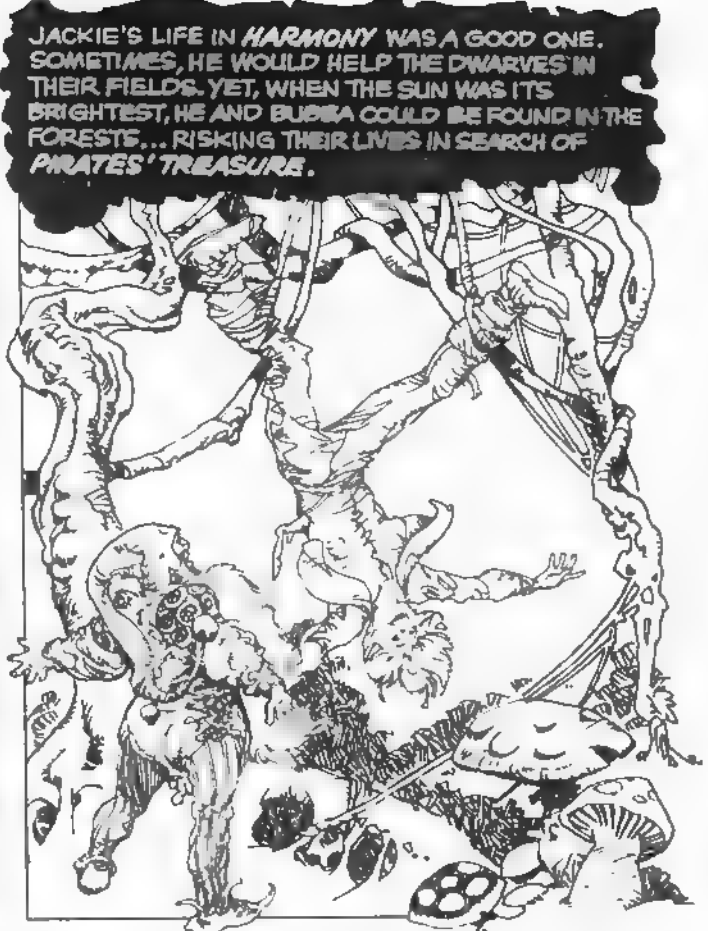
DON'T BE SO **SURE** OF THAT, ROBBIE BOY!



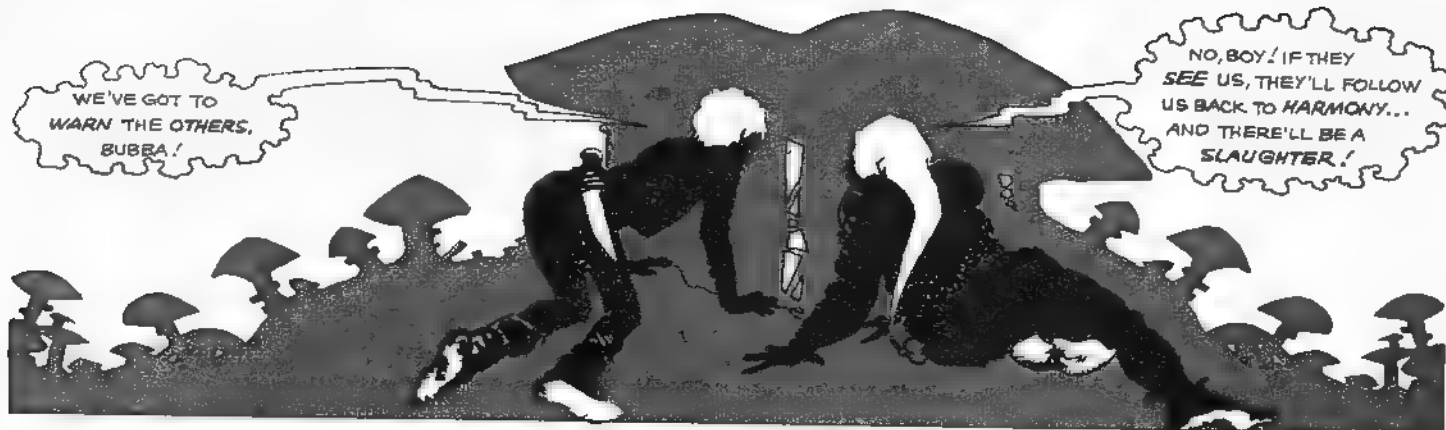
I'VE HEARD HUNTERS TALK OF AN **UNHOLY VILLAGE** NESTLED AWAY IN THE MOUNTAINS YONDER.

THERE'S RUMORS IT'S A VILLAGE OF THE **DAMNED**, INHABITED BY **DEVILS**, NIGHTSTALKING **CREATURES**!









WE'VE GOT TO  
WARN THE OTHERS,  
BUBBA!

NO, BOY! IF THEY  
SEE US, THEY'LL FOLLOW  
US BACK TO HARMONY...  
AND THERE'LL BE A  
SLAUGHTER!



ONLY WAY TO SAVE  
HARMONY IS A  
DIVERSION.

I'LL LEAD THEM  
A MERRY CHASE, ME BOY...  
YOU WARN THE  
OTHERS!



BUBBA! NO  
T-HEY'LL KILL  
YOU!

RUN, BOY! SAVE  
YOURSELF! KING  
BUBBA CAN TAKE  
CARE O'HISSELF!



IT'S ONE'A  
THE DEMON  
PEOPLE!

KETCH  
'IM!

KILL  
HIM!

HELL LEAD  
US TO THE  
OTHERS

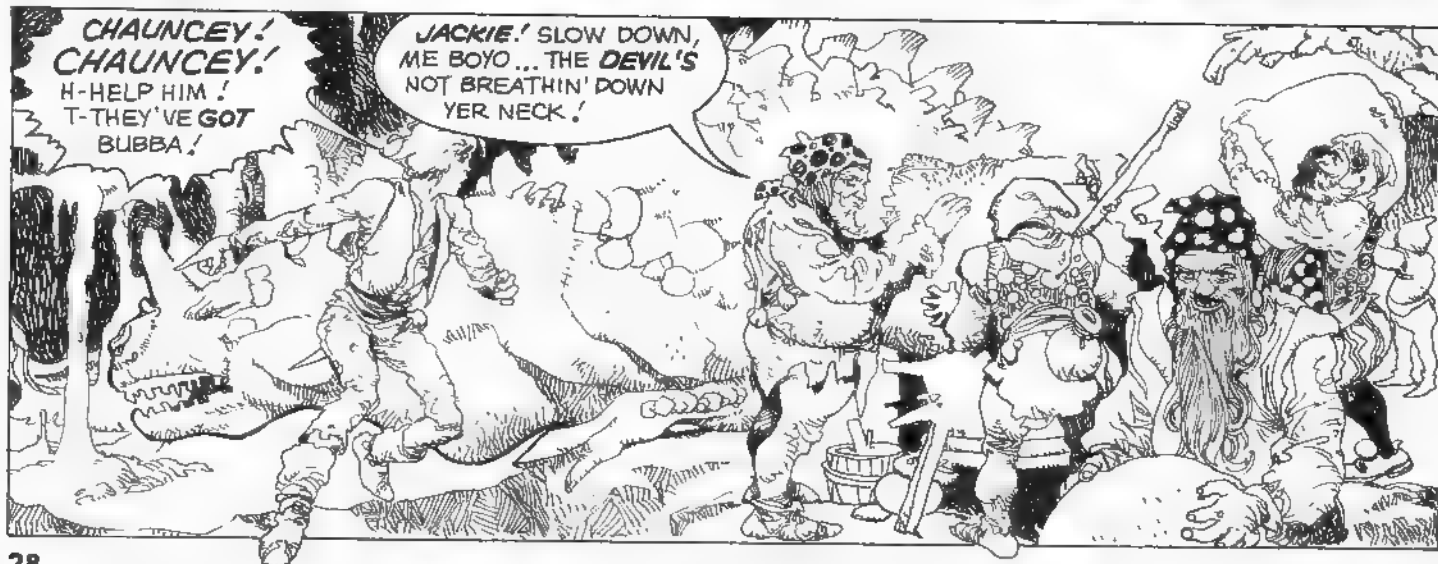


GRAB THE  
BEGGAR!

SLIT  
'IM!

GUT THE  
DEVIL!

JACKIE HAD NO CHOICE. HE COULDN'T  
HELP HIS TINY FRIEND NOW. ALL  
HE COULD DO WAS RUN... WARN THE  
DWARVES... AND HOPE THEY WOULD  
BELIEVE!



CHAUNCEY!  
CHAUNCEY!  
H-HELP HIM!  
T-HEY'VE GOT  
BUBBA!

JACKIE! SLOW DOWN,  
ME BOYO... THE DEVIL'S  
NOT BREATHIN' DOWN  
YER NECK!





ARROWS *SLICED* THE AIR WITH THEIR DEADLY SHRIEK. BLADES *CUT* THE SHRILL SCREAMING SILENCE IN MOANS OF DEATH. AND THE BLOOD OF THE HARMLESS PEACELOVING "*DEMONS*" PAINTED THE EARTH CRIMSON... THE EARTH THEY HAD LOVED... RESPECTED ...AND COME TO CALL THEIR *OWN*.

AND THROUGH IT ALL, TWO SILENT, TEAR-FILLED EYES COULD ONLY *WATCH* THE HORROR... AND *WISH*... AND *HOPE* FOR THE *MIRACLE* THAT WAS SO DESPERATELY *NEEDED*.



A MIRACLE OF *SURVIVAL*!



A MIRACLE OF *LIFE*.

A-A DRAGON!

LORD! SAVE US FROM THE DEVILS MAGICKS!

ROWWWWWRR!



KILL THEM, FLUFF! DESTROY THE CUTTHROAT PIRATES!

ROWWWWWRR!



BUT EVEN *MIRACLES* CAN BE HALTED...  
DESTROYED BY SOMETHING FAR MORE  
TANGIBLE... *REALITY!*



D-DADDY... DADDY...  
YOU *KILLED* THEM! YOU  
MURDERED *KING*  
*BUBBA*. YOU KILLED  
*FLUFF*... THE  
OTHERS!

JACKIE! SON!  
WE DID IT FOR  
YOU!

WE'VE RESCUED  
YOU FROM THE DEVILS...  
*SAVED* YOU!

THEY HAD YOU UNDER  
THEIR *SPELL*, SON! THEY  
HAD YOU THINKING THEY  
WERE *GOOD*... AND WE  
WERE THE *EVIL* ONES!

DON'T  
YOU *SEE?*



NOOO! YOU CAN'T  
KILL HIM! YOU CAN'T  
KILL *FLUFF*!

HE WON'T  
*DIE*! H-HE  
WON'T!

SON!

JACKIE!



YOU'VE GOT TO  
*UNDERSTAND* THAT, SON!  
WE'VE SAVED YOU FROM  
THE *DEMON* MONSTERS!





S-SAVED ME ?

SON !

SON EVERYTHING  
WILL BE ALL RIGHT  
FROM NOW ON !

THERE WAS A TIME... WHEN **DREAMS**  
WERE ALL HE HAD. THERE WAS A TIME  
WHEN JACKIE PAPER WAS A  
DREAMER. AND THE WORLD WAS  
FILLED WITH SUNSHINE, LOVE AND  
THE WONDEROUS SMELL OF BLOSSOMS

BUT THE DAY JACKIE BECAME A **MAN**  
THE WORLD OF IMAGINATION AND  
ADVENTURE WAS **LOST** TO HIM FOREVER



AND IT WAS A PITY. FOR EVEN IN  
**IMAGINATION**, THERE WERE  
BEAUTIFUL **REALITIES**.

THE LARGER MOON OF IRITH WAS SETTING AS THE MORNING SUN CLIMBED INTO THE SKY. THE FOREST TRILLED, CHIRPED AND HUMMED TO ANNOUNCE THE DAWN, BUT THE OVERTURE THIS MORNING WAS A ...

HE STOOD TRANFIXED, THE LOVELIEST UPON HIM, FOR HE HAD NEVER IN HIS LIFE SEEN ANYTHING SO BEAUTIFUL ...

# PRELUDE TO ARMAGEDDON



THEN ...



THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, BUT TO EQUINUS HER VOICE WAS MUSIC ...



SENIOR EQUINUS, MESSENGER OF THE GODS, PAUSED ON HIS ERRAND... ATTRACTED BY A CLEAR, SILVERY VOICE, HE FOLLOWED THE SOUND TO A CRYSTAL POOL WHERE HE SAW HER, A PALE FLAME IN THE SHADOWS...



THEN, A  
RUSTLE  
OF  
MIGHTY  
WINGS...

I SHOULD  
HAVE KNOWN...

...SHE IS ONE OF  
THE **DRAGON  
RIDERS!**

THE WIND SHIFTED  
AND THE CLOUDS  
PARTED, TO REVEAL...

WINGED  
DEMON!

AS SHE STRUCK THE GROUND,  
EQUINUS COULD HEAR THE  
SOUND OF BONES BREAKING...

WITHOUT BREAKING HIS STRIDE,  
HE SCOOPED HER UP IN HIS ARMS...

THE RUINS!...  
MY ONLY  
CHANCE!

SKREEE!

SKREEE!

THEY ARE IN  
RANGE...I FEAR  
I WILL NOT  
MAKE IT...

BUT JUST IN TIME, HE PLUNGED INTO THE COMFORTING SHADOWS OF THE RUINED CITY...



...THE RUINED CAPITAL OF THE DEAD CIVILIZATION OF ANCIENT IRITH...

O GREAT SATORIS... I, SATOR E QUINUS, YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT, CALL UPON YOU...



HIS HEARTFELT PLEA WAS HEARD ON HIGH...

SPEAK, FAITHFUL SATOR! MY FOLLOWERS NEED NEVER FEAR THAT THEIR PLEAS ARE IN VAIN...



LORD OF LIFE AND LOVE, I ASK NOTHING FOR MYSELF, BUT...



...FOR THIS INNOCENT GIRL, WHO LIES SO NEAR DEATH... I ASK THAT YOU GIVE HER THE GIFT THAT ONLY YOU CAN BESTOW... LIFE!



AH, BACHELOR! YOU HAVE FOUND A MATE AT LAST... THIS PLEASES ME!



OF COURSE, I WILL GRANT YOUR REQUEST...

...AND THE BREATH OF LIFE WAS GIVEN THE **DRAGON RIDER**...

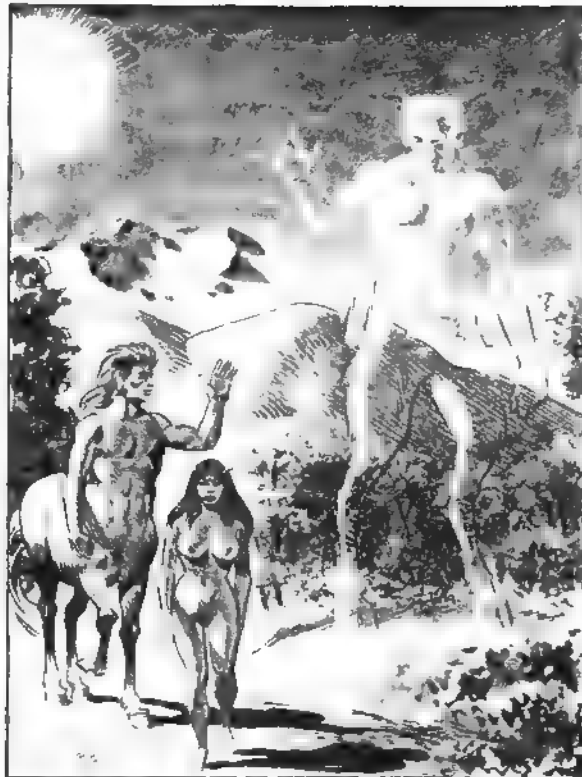


IT WAS NOT I WHO GAVE YOU BACK YOUR LIFE, LITTLE ONE... BUT YOU ARE INCAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING THAT...

VERY WELL, I WILL ACCEPT YOUR GRATITUDE.







THE LUST FOR REVENGE UPON HIM, EQUINUS THUNDERED INTO THE OGRES WITH FLASHING SWORD AND CRUSHING HOOVES...

THE SHORTEST WAY TO CIRILUS GORGOROTH IS **STRAIGHT THROUGH THEM!**

DO NOT BE AFRAID, MELODY... THESE PUNY CREATURES CAN DO NOTHING AGAINST **SENTOR EQUINUS!**

IT WAS INCREDIBLE THAT THIS WOULD BE A WORLD AT WAR...THE SUN WAS WARM UPON THEM AS THEY MADE A LUNCH OF WILD FRUITS AND BERRIES...

I HAVE LIVED IN PARADISE ALL OF MY LIFE...

...BUT I HAVE NEVER BEEN HAPPY UNTIL NOW!



THEN, AS THEY PROCEEDED...

WHO DARES KILL THE MINIONS OF MINOS TAURUS?

I, **SENTOR EQUINUS!**



A BELLOW OF RAGE ECHOED IN HIS HELMET AS MINOS TAURUS LUNGED FORWARD...

THEN DIE, FOOL!



MANY HAVE TRIED, FRIEND!

THE FIGHT WAS LONG AND TERRIBLE...A WELL-AIMED BLOW LANDED ON THE HELMET OF MINOS TAURUS...



THE WAR SPREAD...DRAGON RIDERS FLUSHED AN ARMY OF OGRES FROM THE FOREST...





...OUT INTO THE OPEN PLAIN, WHERE THEY WERE NO MATCH FOR THE CHARGE OF A CAVALRY COMPOSED OF HIGHLY TRAINED, DISCIPLINED CENTAUR LANCERS...



AGE OLD HATREDS DROVE BOTH SIDES TO DEEDS OF INCREDIBLE BRAVERY AND CRUELTY. NO WOUNDED SURVIVORS CRAWLED AWAY FROM THIS ENCOUNTER...FOR EVERY COMBAT WAS FOUGHT TO THE DEATH...



SENTOR EQUINUS FOUGHT LIKE A MADMAN, BUT THE TERRIBLE CHAIN MACE OF MINOS TAURUS STRUCK HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN...



BLOOD GUSHED FROM HIS LACERATED CHEST, AND FROM HIS HEAD, BLINDING HIM...HE FELT HIS STRENGTH POURING OUT WITH IT...



A FINAL, CRUSHING BLOW, AND HE WAS DOWN...



THE AERIAL  
BATTLE HAD  
GONE WELL  
FOR THE  
FORCES OF  
SATORIS,  
AND DRAGON  
RIDERS WERE  
HUNTING  
DOWN THE  
REMAINING  
DEMONS WITH  
FIRE BOLTS...



WE HAVE  
**LOST**,  
MY LORD...



DO NOT DESPAIR  
YET! THERE IS ONE  
FINAL WEAPON...  
I HESITATED TO  
USE IT, BUT NOW  
WE **MUST!**  
LEAVE ME!  
I SHALL CALL  
UPON BLUD  
TO COME TO  
OUR AID...

KARION CHANTED AN  
ANCIENT INVOCATION...



...AN INVOCATION COM-  
POSED OF CURSES  
AND BLASPHEMES...

...AND IN ANSWER, LOATHSOME SHAPES  
ROSE UP FROM THE GROUND...



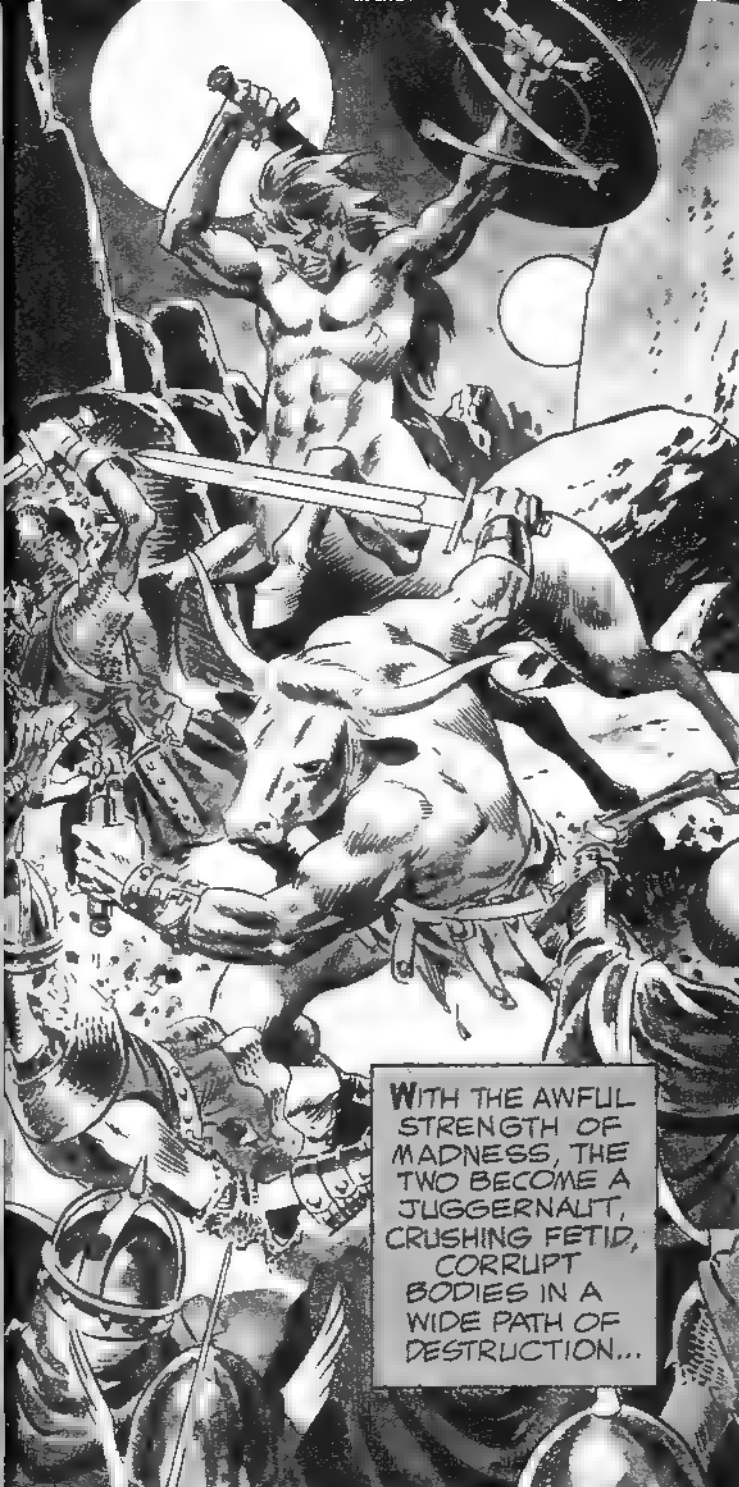
WHY DO  
YOU  
PAUSE?  
KILL ME  
AND BE  
DONE!




THERE IS NO NEED.  
YOU ARE ALREADY  
DEAD... WE ARE  
ALL DEAD!







SENOR EQUINUS!  
YOU ARE **WASTING**  
**TIME...** THE DEAD  
OUTNUMBER THE  
LIVING! WE ARE  
**DEFEATED!** THIS  
IS NOT YOUR FUNCTION...  
IT IS NOT ACCOMPLISH-  
ING THE MISSION I  
SENT YOU ON!



**NOW GO! GO TO**  
**CIRIUS GORGOROTH!**  
**FIND THE MICROCOSM**  
**AND DO WHAT**  
**MUST BE DONE!**  
**AND HURRY!!**

WITH THE AWFUL  
STRENGTH OF  
MADNESS, THE  
TWO BECOME A  
JUGGERNAUT,  
CRUSHING FETID,  
CORRUPT  
BODIES IN A  
WIDE PATH OF  
DESTRUCTION...



**HURRY! THERE**  
**IS NOT MUCH TIME**  
**LEFT...**

THE MIGHTY TAURUS COVERED SENOR'S  
DEPARTURE, FIGHTING AS HE HAD NEVER  
FOUGHT, ...BUT, THOUGH HE SMASHED  
AND CUT THE DEAD INTO FRAGMENTS...

...THE FRAGMENTS CONTINUED TO  
ATTACK!

...AND AT LAST, MINOS TAURUS, THE ONLY SHIELD BETWEEN EQUINUS AND THE HORDE OF THE LIVING DEAD, RECEIVED A MORTAL THRUST...



...AND STILL HE REFUSED TO FALL, BUT CONTINUED TO REND AND CUT AND SMASH EVERYTHING THAT CAME WITHIN REACH...

BUT BY THEN THE CENTAUR GUIDED BY SATORIS, WAS IN THE HEART OF CIRIUS GORGOROTH...AND THEN HE SAW IT...

I AM HERE, O'LORD...  
WHAT MUST I DO?  
CAN YOU TELL ME  
NOW?

YES, GOOD SONTOR...  
YOU ARE MY ONLY HOPE  
NOW...IT IS BETTER THAT  
EVERYONE DIE THAN A  
WORLD DOMINATED  
BY BLUD AND  
THE LIVING DEAD...

NOW GO...  
FIND THE  
GLOBE  
WITH TWO  
LARGE  
SATELLITES...

**THE MICROCOSM!**

AND  
NOW..?

**BREAK  
THE  
MOON!**



FOR A MOMENT, HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THIS WAS REALLY A TINY FACSIMILE OR WHETHER HE WAS SUDDENLY AS LARGE AS THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE... HE REACHED OUT A HAND, SEIZED THE TINY MOON, CRUSHED IT...



...AND DIED.



...AND EARTH'S  
NEAREST MOON  
EXPLODED!

EARTHQUAKES  
TORE THE  
CONTINENT  
IN HALF...  
VOLCANOES  
ERUPTED,  
SPEWING  
LAVA OVER  
THE BATTLE-  
FIELD...

MINOS TAURUS  
SUFFERED  
WOUND UPON  
WOUND...  
AND STILL  
HE FOUGHT...

MINOS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?  
YOU FIGHT YOUR OWN...

KARION!

THEN MIGHTY  
MINOS TAURUS  
FELL...

A MOUNTAINOUS TIDAL WAVE  
TOWERED OVER THE SHUDDER-  
ING, TORTURED CONTINENT...

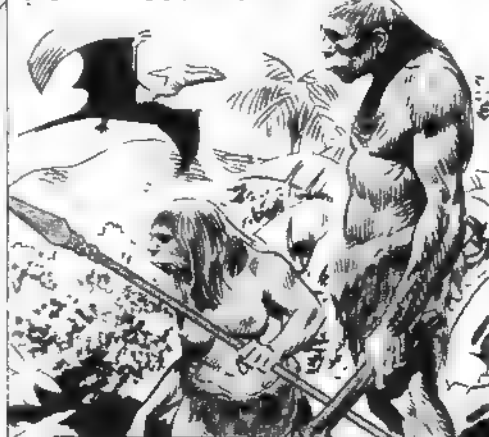




...AND CRASHED DOWN UPON IRITH, WHERE ARMIES CONTINUED TO FIGHT EVEN AS THE LAND UNDER THEIR FEET SANK INTO THE SEA...

AT LAST IT WAS OVER...  
IRITH WAS GONE,  
LEAVING ONLY  
LEGENDS TO  
MARK ITS  
EXISTENCE...

BUT THERE WAS OTHER LAND,  
OTHER CONTINENTS, WHERE  
OGRES SURVIVED...



...AND DEVELOPED INTO  
THE DOMINANT SPECIES...

THE FEW DRAGONS LEFT  
EVENTUALLY DIED OUT,  
AND WERE REPLACED  
BY NEW LIFE FORMS...



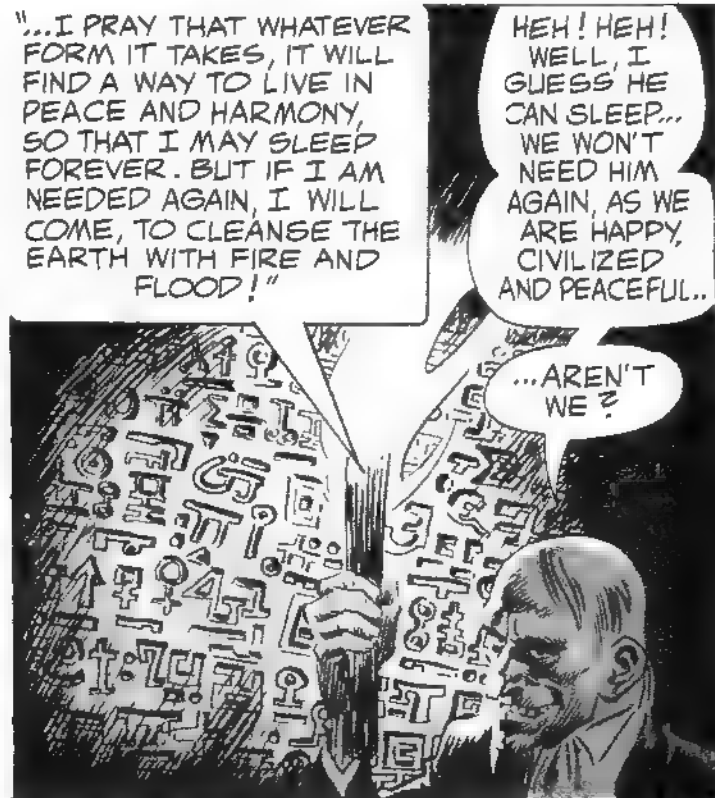
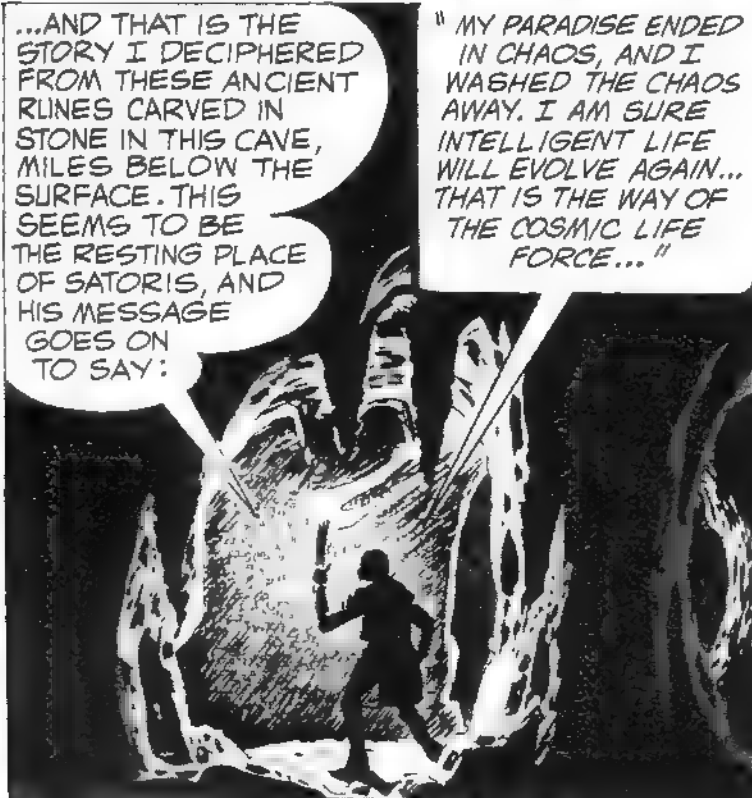
...AND THAT IS THE  
STORY I DECIPHERED  
FROM THESE ANCIENT  
RUNES CARVED IN  
STONE IN THIS CAVE,  
MILES BELOW THE  
SURFACE. THIS  
SEEMS TO BE  
THE RESTING PLACE  
OF SATORIS, AND  
HIS MESSAGE  
GOES ON  
TO SAY:

"MY PARADISE ENDED  
IN CHAOS, AND I  
WASHED THE CHAOS  
AWAY. I AM SURE  
INTELLIGENT LIFE  
WILL EVOLVE AGAIN...  
THAT IS THE WAY OF  
THE COSMIC LIFE  
FORCE..."

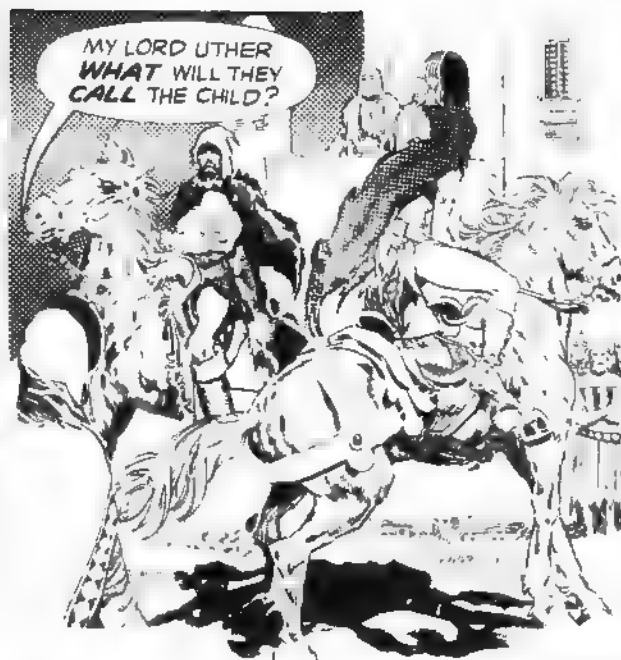
"...I PRAY THAT WHATEVER  
FORM IT TAKES, IT WILL  
FIND A WAY TO LIVE IN  
PEACE AND HARMONY,  
SO THAT I MAY SLEEP  
FOREVER. BUT IF I AM  
NEEDED AGAIN, I WILL  
COME, TO CLEANSE THE  
EARTH WITH FIRE AND  
FLOOD!"

HEH! HEH!  
WELL, I  
GUESS HE  
CAN SLEEP...  
WE WON'T  
NEED HIM  
AGAIN, AS WE  
ARE HAPPY,  
CIVILIZED  
AND PEACEFUL...

...AREN'T  
WE?







# A Secret KING

IT IS 471 A.D. ROME RULES AN ANCIENT ENGLAND. AND THERE IS **DARKNESS** OVER THE LAND, THOUGH BUT A FEW NOW KNOW IT THIS IS THE **LAST NIGHT OF DARKNESS**. A SINGLE, FRAGILE **LIGHT** WAS CREATED. AND **NURTURED CAREFULLY**, ONE DAY, IT WILL **ILLUMINATE THE EARTH** FOR FIFTEEN HUNDRED YEARS TO COME.



IT IS A **DARKSOME** NOVEMBER. A **MAN CHILD** WAS BORN OF KING UTHUR PENDRAGON AND HIS WIFE YGRAINE. A CHILD UTHUR WOULD **NEVER** SEE AGAIN. A VERY **SPECIAL** CHILD, TO BE BORNE AWAY BY **SECRECY**, CLOAKED AND PROTECTED BY **POWERS NOT UNDERSTOOD**. A VERY **SPECIAL** CHILD. A **SECRET KING**.



AND THEY NAMED HIM... **ARTHUR**.







MASTER, I AM SO SORRY. I HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE HUNTING YOUR FALCONS TODAY.

YOU SEE... I SPIED A FAT, YOUNG DUCK... BUT THE FALCON WAS SPYING IT TOO. MY ARROW AND THE FALCON REACHED THE DUCK AT THE SAME TIME AND --

ENOUGH! DAMNIT ALL GIRL! YOU HAVE YOUR OWN WAY OF FOULING UP MY LESSONS.

LESSONS?



YES, LESSONS! AND THANK GOD YOU ARE A POOR MARKSMAN!

MARKSWOMAN!



SCHOOL IS OUT! COME DOWN...



...ARTHUR.

IT WAS MY FAULT, MERLIN. I SAW SNIVEL ABOUT TO KILL THE DUCK, BUT I THOUGHT I COULD GET TO IT FIRST. I COULDN'T.



ARTHUR! MERLIN'S BEEN CHANGING YOU INTO ANIMALS AGAIN, HAS HE?

OF COURSE, LOVE. HOW ELSE AM I TO DISCOVER THE WAYS OF GOD'S WORLD?

MERLIN, I REALLY LIKED BEING A HUNTING BIRD!



YANK IT, SNIV DOESN'T HURT.

THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME MERLIN LET ME BE SOMETHING MEAN. I WAS GETTING TIRED OF SEEING HOW DULL THINGS LIKE BUGS, FISH AND TURTLES LIVE.



WHAT DID YOU LEARN AS A BEAST OF PREY, ARTHUR?

I DON'T REALLY KNOW, SIR. EXCEPT... I LIKED THE POWER I HAD... THE POWER OF BEING ABLE TO KILL WEAKER ANIMALS.

BUT... WELL ONCE YOU HAVE POWER LIKE THAT, ONE CAN AFFORD NOT TO USE IT. EXCEPT PERHAPS TO HELP THE WEAKER ANIMALS.



THEN YOU HAVE LEARNED A VITAL LESSON. MIGHT DOES NOT MAKE RIGHT. JUST BECAUSE A MAN IS STRONG AND POWERFUL, HE IS ABLE TO DIRECT HIS POWER TOWARD THE PLACES WHERE IT CAN DO THE MOST GOOD, RATHER THAN USING IT DESTRUCTIVELY.

SHALL WE "LIMP" HOME, ART?



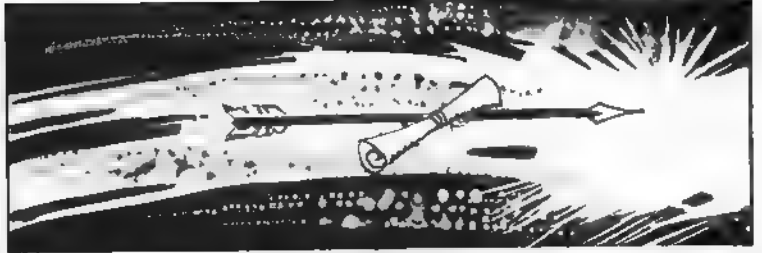






LIGHT THE  
ARROW FOR  
ME

SNIV...**WHAT**  
DID THOSE BLACK  
RIDERS STEAL  
FROM MERLIN?



A NOTE HERE  
UPON THIS MESSAGE  
ARROW! IT IS FROM  
**MERLIN THE MAGICIAN!**  
**QUICK, LADS! RUN TELL**  
**SIR ECTOR DANGER IS**  
**NEAR! AND OPEN THE**  
**GATES! MERLIN'S YOUNG**  
**WARD IS AWAITING**  
**SANCTUARY! HURRY!**



**ARTHUR! RUN**  
**TO THE CASTLE!**  
**ROMAN SOLDIERS**  
**COME!**

**HALT!**



WHAT HAVE WE HERE!  
BRIGANDS? HIGHWAYMEN?  
**HAYAHYAH! OR TWO RUN-**  
**AWAY WAIFS?! MORE**  
**LIKELY! TRASH AT ANY RATE!**

**BACK**  
**OFF, PIG!**

HERE! LET'S  
**KILL THIS BRAT**  
**AND DIVIDE THE**  
**WENCH BETWEEN**  
**US!**



WHY! YOU  
SUCKLING **BITCH-**  
**CUR!** I'LL KILL  
Y...**UUGNNN!**

**RUN, ARTHUR!**  
**TO THE**  
**CASTLE!!**

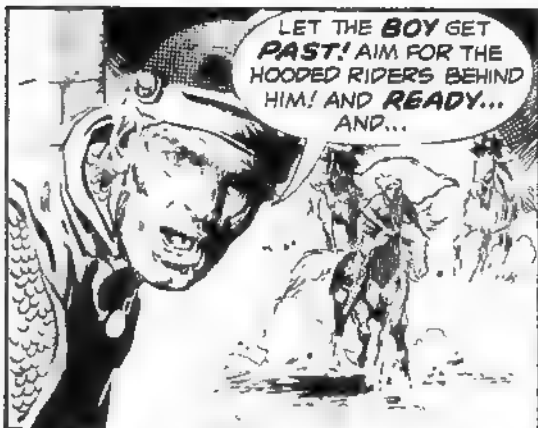


I CAN'T GRAB  
HER! THE **DEMON!**

**BLACK**  
**RIDERS!!**

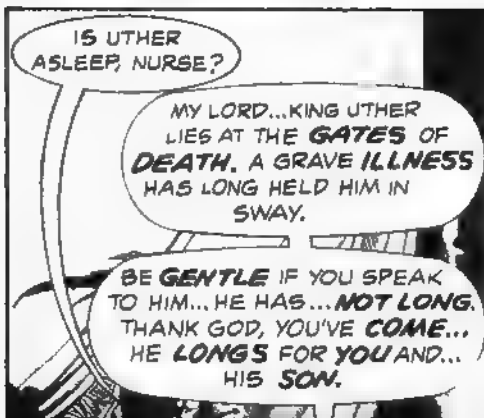
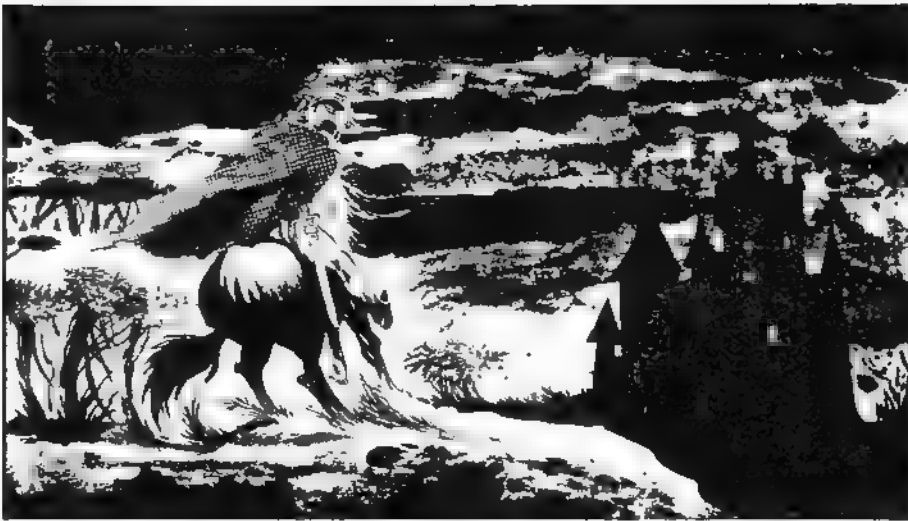


**REEEEEEEE!!**











DOWN BY THE CORNISH SEA, THE SORCERER  
DIVESTS HIS ROBES...



MARRYK  
MYRK, YOU HAVE  
VISTORS!

...AND A NEW **MERLIN**  
WADES INTO THE  
MURKY WATERS.



I BUT CAN  
HOPE THY WAT'RY  
DRAWBRIDGE IS  
DOWN!



MARRYK MYRK!  
IT IS **MERLIN**!



**MERLIN?** BY GOD'S  
GILLS! OLD MYRK AIN'T  
LAID EYES ON YOU SINCE  
YOU QUIT THE **DRUIDS** FOR  
SACRIFICIN' LIVE **BABIES**!  
COME GIVE US A HUG,  
MATE!



WAL, WAL! SO THAT'S  
WHAT YE BIN DOIN' AWL  
THESE **YEARS**! AND ME  
THUNK YE WUZ **DEAD**!  
REARIN' UP YOUNG ENGLISH  
**PRINCES**! WAL, WAL!  
**GRAND OL' MERLIN!**

JUST **ONE**  
YOUNG PRINCE...  
AND HE'S  
**ENOUGH!**

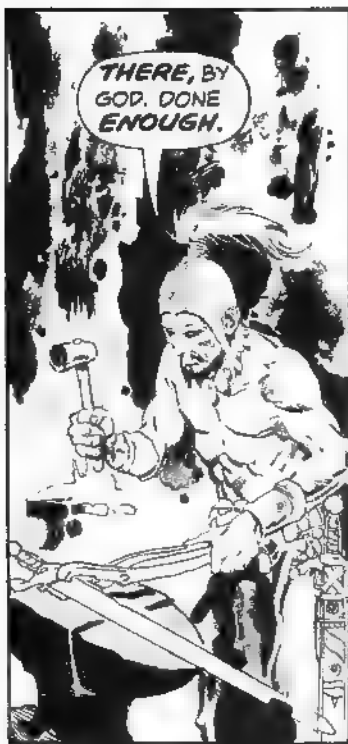


NOT MANY SAILORS IN THESE  
CORNISH WATERS THESE DAYS  
YOU'VE **EATEN** ALL, NEAR  
ABOUT, I SEE YOUR LARDERS  
ARE **SPARSE** OF MEAT.

HOW WOULD LIKE TO HAVE  
A **WHOLE LOAD** OF **MAN**  
**MEAT** FOR YOUR HOOKS, AND  
GET TO BE PERSONAL FRIENDS  
WITH THE **NEW KING** OF  
ALL ENGLONDE?







THERE, BY  
GOD. DONE  
ENOUGH.



IT WOULDN'T FOOL  
A SCHOOL BOY, ROUGH  
AND CRUDE. BUT  
FOR A PIG IN A  
POLK...



...OR A SWORD  
IN A STONE...  
YAH!



I CAN DAMNABLY  
SURE FOOL SOME  
BLACK RIDERS!



HIE! HALT YOU  
MAN! WHITHER AND  
WHENCE! I  
DEMAND!



WHO ARE YOU  
OLD MAN? AND  
UPON WHAT  
BUSINESS?

ME? OH, I AM  
A SERVANT TO MY  
LORD, **AMBROSIUS  
MERLINUS.**

MERLIN?  
WHAT'S YOUR  
ERRAND?

I TAKE OLD  
MERLIN THIS QUEER  
SWORD RIVEN INTO  
A STONE.



SEEMS AS **SOMEONE**  
STOLE A **DECOY** SWORD  
AND STONE FROM MERLIN.  
**THIS IS THE REAL ONE**  
I DELIVER.



NOW...YOU  
WOULDN'T BE  
WANTING TO STEAL  
THIS'N WOULD  
YE, MATE?

RRRRRR!  
DAMN YOU!



TELL YOUR MASTERS  
TO **ENJOY** THE **FALSE**  
SWORD AND STONE! FOR  
MERLIN WILL **CRUSH**  
THEM WITH THE  
**TRUE** ONES!

IF YOU AND  
YOUR MATES  
DON'T DO **ME**  
IN **FIRST**.  
GODS!







MISBEGOTTEN **IDIOTS!** YOU HAVE STOLEN THE **WRONG** STONE, AND THUS PLAN TO EXCHANGE IT FOR THE **REAL**, WITH THE LIFE OF A STUPID **SERVANT BOY!** HAHAKA! STILL...



...THE BOY IS MORE USEFUL TO ME THAN A **PRETTY** STONE RIVEN INTO A ROCK.

I KNOW NOT **WHY** YOUR MASTERS SENT YOU INTO DANGER FOR SUCH A **USELESS** TRINKET.

HERE!



TAKE MY SILLY **BAUBLE** IF IT MEANS SO MUCH TO YOU! AND LEAVE MY **SLAVE BOY** ON THIS ISLAND WHEN YOU'VE GONE!

YEEHEEHEE! **IDIOTS! STONES** AND **SWORDS!** HYAH!



DAMN! HE'S **RIGHT!** RISKING OUR LIVES FOR SUCH **FOOLISARY!** OLD MERLIN **LAUGHS** AT US!

WELL...NEVERTHEEMIND, LEAVE US **FINISH** THIS TASK, AND GO HOME, BRING THE BRAT! **SERVANT BOYS** AND **BAUBLES!** UHN!



WE'LL HAVE A LOOK AT THIS "**PRECIOUS** TOY" AND GO OUR WAY.

MERLIN **DEFEATS** US BY **LEAVING** IT TO US. DAMN!



**LIAR!!** THAT OLD LIAR HAS **TRICKED** US! THIS IS BUT A CHEAP **FORGERY!** FOR THIS, HE'LL NOT HAVE HIS STONE, HIS FAKE OR HIS **SERVANT!**

KILL THE BRAT

MERLIN!!







TIS DONE, AND DAMNED!  
ARTHUR IS **SAFE**! SNIVEL  
**IMMORTAL** AS ALWAYS! DEAR  
OLD **MYRK** HAS HIS **FRESH**  
**MEAT** AND I...HAVE  
BACK MY **STONE**.

AND EVEN THESE  
BLACK RIDERS HAVE **SOME-  
THING**...THE RELIEF OF NOT  
HAVING TO REPORT BACK TO  
THEIR MASTERS THEY  
HAVE **FAILED**.



I'M **SORRY** YOU  
WERE WORRIED. BUT  
WE MAGICIAN'S FAMILIARS  
HAVE MORE LIVES THAN **CATS**.  
NOW THAT I THINK OF IT...  
I ... **USED** TO BE A CAT.  
AH, WELL. ALL IS  
FINE NOW, EH?

MERLIN BROUGHT  
YOU **BACK** TO  
**LIFE**, DIDN'T  
HE, SNIV?



AND MERLIN... WHAT  
WAS THIS **ALL ABOUT**?  
AND WHAT OF ALL  
THESE **STOLEN STONES**  
AND **SWORDS** AND  
BLACK RIDERS AND  
SUCH?

ALL JUST  
**ANOTHER**  
**LESSON** FOR  
YOUR STUDIES,  
MY BOY.  
MERELY THAT



WELL, ARTHUR, FOR ME,  
IT'S OFF TO **LONDON** FOR  
A **BUSINESS TRIP**... AND  
FOR YOU, BACK TO  
ECTOR'S...FOR **SQUIRE**  
**TRAINING**.

CAN'T I GO  
WITH YOU,  
MERLIN?

YOU GO LEARN  
**COURTLY MANNERS**  
WITH SIR KAY AND  
ECTOR! PERHAPS  
I'LL SEE YOU  
LATER.



**SNIVEL!** DELIVER  
THE BOY TO ECTOR  
AND COME ALONG  
TO **LONDON**. **WORK**  
TO DO, Y'KNOW.





I'M IN GREAT **TROUBLE**, Y'KNOW. I FORGOT TO PACK KAY'S **SWORD** AND NOW I HAVE TO FIND HIM **ANOTHER** ONE.

OH?



BUT SAY, IT'S SO GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN. **WHY** DID YOU HAVE TO COME TO LONDON **ANYWAY**?

OH... I HAD TO **DELIVER** SOMETHING FOR THE **KING**.

BUT THERE IS **NO KING** SINCE **HE** DIED.

WELL, **RIGHT** YOU ARE!



SAY... I **JUST** HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE THERE'S A **SWORD** YOU **MIGHT** HAVE.

**REALLY**, SIRE? **WHERE**?

**RIGHT B. EHIND** ME, **THERE** IN THE **COURT**YARD.



LOOK! THERE IS A **SWORD**! AND... IT LOOKS... **FAMILIAR**.

**ALL SWORDS** LOOK ALIKE, Y'KNOW.

HOW **JOLLY**! I CAN BRING IT TO KAY SO HE WON'T BE LATE FOR THE **GAMES**!



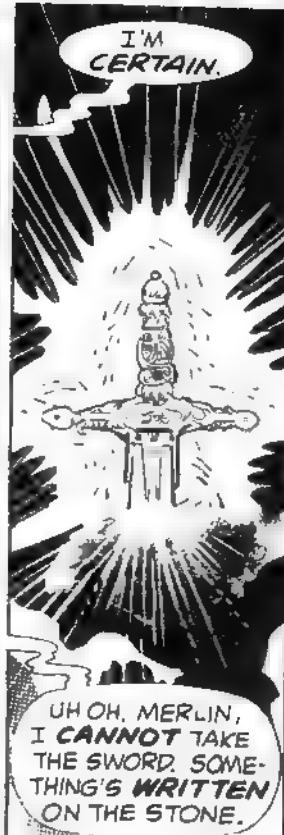
IT'S SO **BEAUTIFUL**! OF COURSE I'LL JUST **BORROW** IT... I'D BRING IT **BACK**, OF COURSE.

EHUT OF COURSE. **SHHHH**!



GO ON, ARTHUR. THE **SWORD** IS THERE FOR **YOU** TO USE.

ARE YOU **CERTAIN** IT'LL BE **ALRIGHT**?



I'M **CERTAIN**.

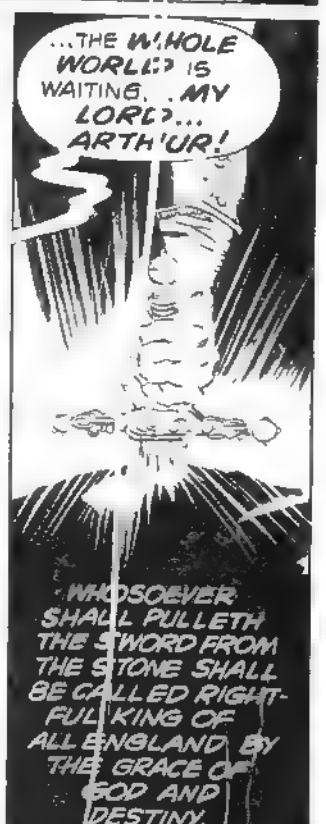
UH OH, MERLIN, I **CANNOT** TAKE THE **SWORD**. SOMETHING'S **WRITTEN** ON THE **STONE**.



NEVER MIND THAT, IT SAYS NOTHING THAT WOULD **CONCERN** A **LITTLE SQUIRE**.



GO AHEAD... KAY IS **PROBABLY** WAITING FOR IT... IN **FACT**...



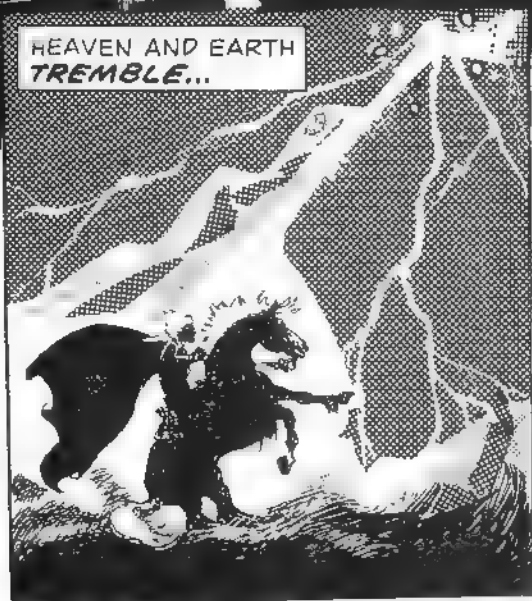
...THE **WHOLE** **WORLD**? IS WAITING... **MY LORD**?... **ARTHUR**!

**WHOEVER** SHALL PULLETH THE **SWORD** FROM THE **STONE** SHALL BE CALLED **RIGHTFUL** KING OF ALL **ENGLAND** BY THE **GRACE** OF **GOD** AND **DESTINY**.





ALIEN WINGS BEAT **FORBODINGLY** UPON  
V OLENT WINDS **THIS** NIGHT.



HEAVEN AND EARTH  
**TREMBLE...**



...AS **GODS**  
AWAKEN...

# DAX<sup>the</sup> DAMNED


LONG HAVE I KNOWN MY LIFE IS **CURSED**  
BY THE GODS. DAX IS NO MORE THAN A  
TORMENTED PLAYTHING. SOMETHING TO BE  
PROVOKED. USED **DAMNED** AM I BY NATURE ONLY  
OF MY LIFE. A WARRIOR BEARS HIS SWORD ONLY  
WHERE THE GODS STEER HIS PATH. **I** AM A  
**WARRIOR**. NOTHING MORE THAN A **PAWN** UPON  
SOME SUPERNATURAL BOARD, IN A TIMELESS GAME OF...

# CHESS


STORY: ESTEBAN MAROTO / ART: ESTEBAN MAROTO

...IN MALEVOLENT **SPLendor**.







AN IDLE GOD, FILLED  
WITH TORMENT, BENT  
LOW ACROSS THE EARTH  
AND FOUND HIS **PAWN**.  
AND DAX WAS DRAWN  
THROUGH THE **NETHER**.



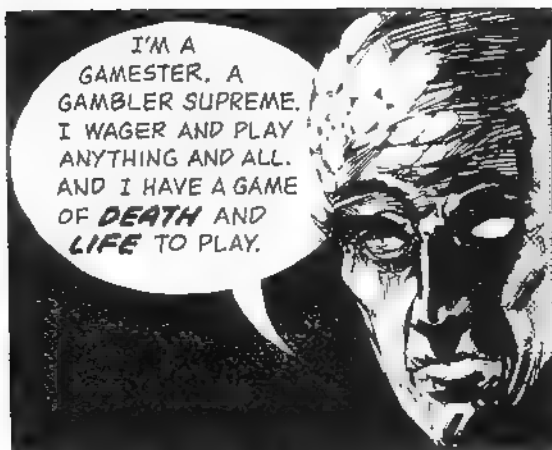
FALLING BEYOND  
ENDLESSNESS, MY  
STRAINED EYES SAW  
**THAT** WHICH WAS  
NEITHER PROPHET  
NOR SEER, NOR  
DREAMER NOR  
**MADMAN** HAS  
**DARED** TO BEHOLD.



MY DESCENT SLOWED  
AND GENTLY TOUCHED  
I THE FLINT. AND **LO!**  
DAX WAS WITHIN THE  
HALLS OF THE MOST  
**HOLY**, SURELY.



DAX, DEAR BOY,  
HULLO! I CAST A  
PROJECTION TO  
**FETCH** YOU. I AM  
ATROPOS. I REPRESENT  
THE DESTINY THAT NEITHER  
MEN NOR GODS CAN CHANGE.  
YOU SEE, I HAVE INVENTED  
AN EXCITING **GAME**,  
AND NEEDED SOMEONE  
TO HELP ME PLAY IT.



I'M A  
GAMESTER. A  
GAMBLER SUPREME.  
I WAGER AND PLAY  
ANYTHING AND ALL.  
AND I HAVE A GAME  
OF **DEATH** AND  
**LIFE** TO PLAY.



I'M NO GAMESTER, LORD.  
ONLY A **SWORDMAN**.  
A WARRIOR. I PLAY **NOT**.  
WHY CHOOSE **ME**?



I CHOOSE **YOU**  
BECAUSE YOU ARE **ALREADY**  
MARKED BY THE GODS FOR  
**TORMENT**. I'M A LESSER  
LORD HERE, AND MAY ONLY  
USE THOSE **ALREADY**  
**DAMNED**.



I KNOW THE GREAT  
LORDS USE YOU FREELY  
LIKE A PAWN OF CHESS.  
I **PITY** YOU. THEREFORE,  
I GIVE THE CHANCE TO  
BE AS ONE OF YOUR  
TORMENTORS...

..TO BE AS  
A **GOD**!

IN **THIS** GAME DAX  
WILL HOLD THE VERY  
POWER OF LIFE...  
AND DEATH IN HIS  
**HAND**.



NEVER BEFORE HAD I  
REFUSED A **CHALLENGE**.  
BUT NOW...



YOU **KNOW** THE TASTE OF  
BEING BUT A CHESSPIECE AS  
**BITTER**. NOW TASTE THE  
LUXURY OF BEING A **PLAYER**.  
A **GOD**! YOUR CHESSPIECES  
ASSEMBLE EVEN NOW.  
**BEHOLD**!



MY HEART LEAPED WHEN MY EYES WITNESSED THE WHITE FIGURES MATERIALIZE BEFORE ME. MY **FATHER. BROTHER. KINSMEN** AND FRIENDS I LOVED WELL. I LOVED THEM ALL STILL, EVEN IN **DEATH!** MY **CHESSMEN.**



YOU MAY HAVE EACH ONE BACK IN LIFE IF YOU **WIN** MY GAME.



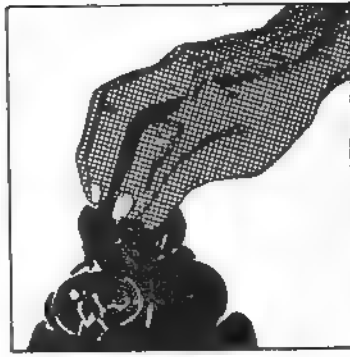
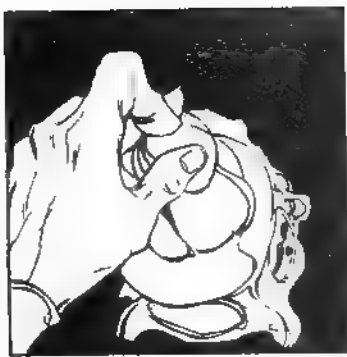
YET WITH EACH MOVE YOU LOSE, ONE WILL **DIE** AGAIN. UNTIL ALL ARE BACK WITHIN THE WRETCHED WALLS OF **DEATH**. THEY ARE **TRULY** ALIVE NOW, BUT ARE MUTE PUPPETS TILL GAME'S END. IF **ANY** LET THEM LIVE THEN.



AND LOOK, DAX! THE BLACKS! **MY** FIGURE PIECES! **THEY** ARE AT **MY** COMMAND! I BELIEVE WE ARE READY. LET US BEGIN.

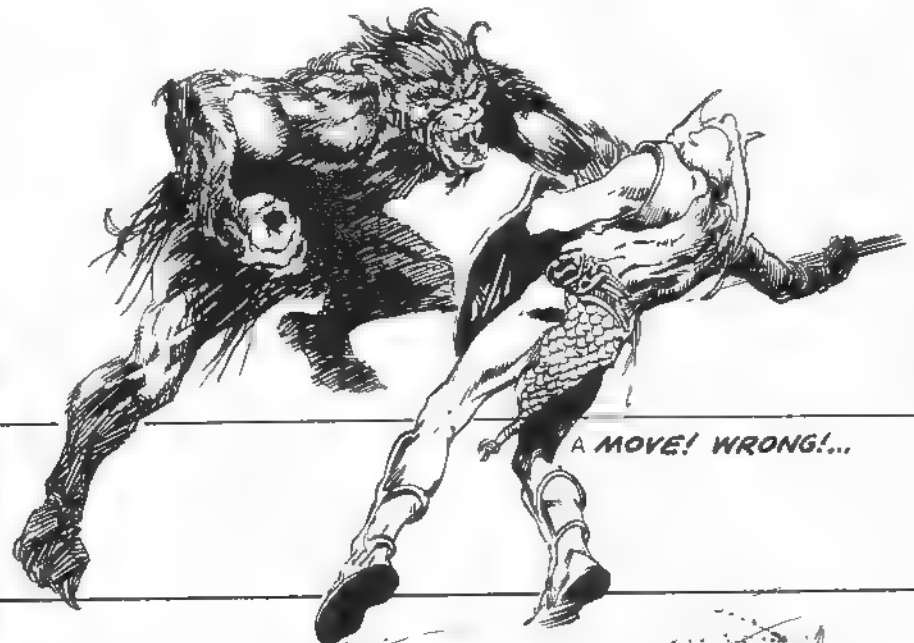


IN THE EYE OF **LEERING** DESTINY, WE SAT TO **PLAY.**



WHAT SPORT COULD I HAVE BEEN? A CHESSPIECE IN MY HAND RATHER THAN A SWORD, A SINGLE MOVE, A MORTAL COMBAT.

WITH EACH MOVE UPON THE BOARD, THE LIVING CHESSMEN EMULATE. I LIFTED MY FIGURE. RONIUS, A COUSIN SLAIN, STIRRED TO LIFE. ATROPOS COUNTERED, A DEMON RUSHED AT RONIUS.



A MOVE! WRONG!...

RONIUS DIED. SCREAMING.



FORFEIT ONE PIECE, DAX, ONE LIFE.



WHUMP!



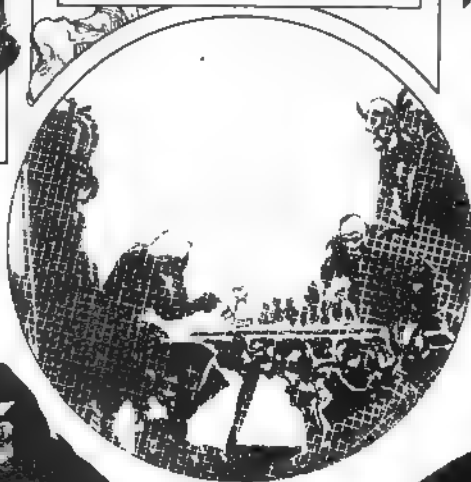
WHAT AN **ASS!** NOT A **MOVE** COULD I MAKE RIGHT. PIECE BY PIECE FELL...



...AS I NUMBLY WATCHED FRIEND BY FRIEND CLOVEN FELL BY DEMON.



R PPED, GASHED, DISEMBOWELED. THEIR OOZING ENTRAILS **FEASTED** UPON.



TWO  
PIECES  
LEFT, DAX.  
NOT EASY  
EVEN BEING  
A **GOD**, IS  
IT?



THERE WAS BUT ONE WHITE PIECE LEFT. MY **FATHER**. MY SWORD TREMBLED TOWARD MY HAND.



AND FINALLY... **CHECKMATE...** WITH THE QUEEN, TO BE MATE ON THE SECOND MOVE. SAY A VERY QUICK FAREWELL TO YOUR FATHER. QUICK NOW!



ALAS.



I HAD SAT TOO LONG

NOT **HIM!** NOT MY **FATHER!** GET BACK FROM HIM, FILTH!



I RUSHED TO THE CRUMPLED LORD. YET MY FINGERS HAD NO NEED TO FEEL FOR A PULSE. HE HAD BEEN RETURNED TO MY MEMORIES.



PUT DOWN YOUR SWORD. IT HAS NO POWER HERE!

NO POWER BUT TO **SLAY**. TO KILL.  
AND KILLING IS THE **ONLY** THING  
TANGIBLE HERE. THE ONLY CAUSE  
WORTH PURSUING. YET I NEEDED  
NOT TO HAVE TRAVELED TO  
HEAVEN TO KILL. I AM NO  
GAMESTER. I AM A **KILLER**.

LET HIM  
**LIVE!**

**THIS** IS THE DIFFERENCE  
IN GODS AND MEN! I  
**UNDERSTAND!** GODS  
LIVE TO **KILL**... MEN  
KILL TO **LIVE**.

FOOLISHLY  
**SIMPLE**.  
THANK YOU DAX!  
NOW **BEGONE!**

**BRACOOO!**

**IMMMNNNN!!!**

AND THE GAMESTER GOD THREW THE  
FISH **BACK** INTO THE POND. FOR THERE  
WERE **OTHER** FISHERS WAITING TO  
NET IT. A FEVERISH DREAM HAD IT  
ALL BEEN.

AND DREAM IT **MIGHT** HAVE  
BEEN. BUT CRUELLY THEY WOULD  
NOT EVEN GIVE ME THE HOPE IT  
**WAS** A DREAM. FOR I WAS SENT  
ALONG A GRIM **REMINDER** OF A  
BITTER GAME OF CHESS.

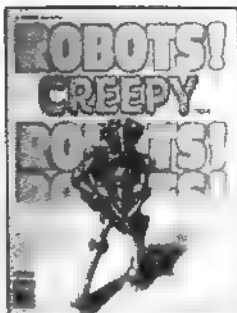
"TIS ALL A CHEQUER-BOARD OF NIGHTS AND DAYS  
WHERE DESTINY WITH MEN FOR PIECES PLAYS;  
HITHER AND THITHER MOVES, AND MATES AND SLAYS,  
AND ONE BY ONE IN THE CLOSET LAYS."

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYAM

**END**

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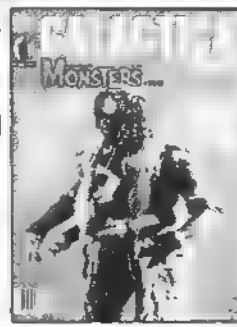
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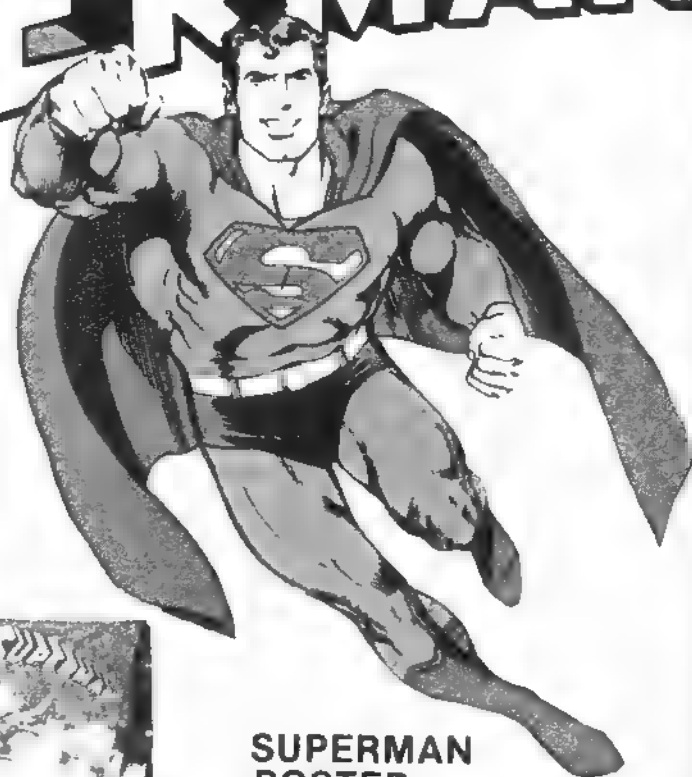
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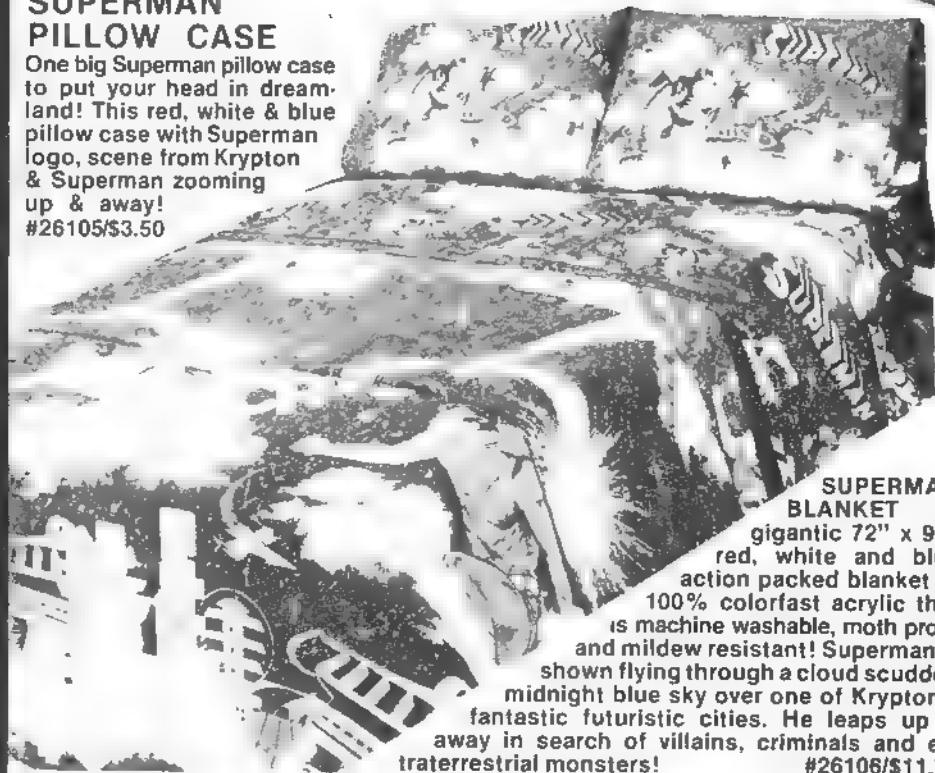
# SUPERMAN

## A Super Selection for Superman Collectors

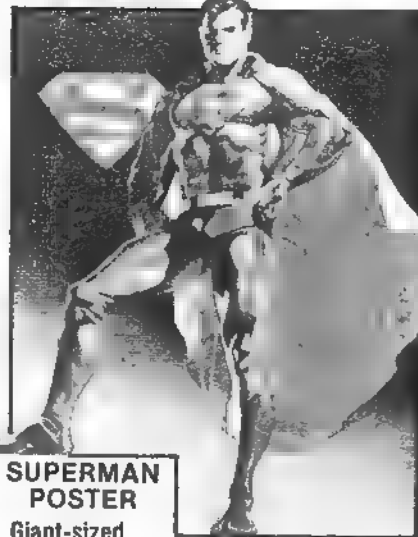


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### SUPERMAN POSTER



### SUPERMAN POSTER

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Is it a bird?  
Is it a plane?  
No it's...  
**Krypton's man of steel!**



# 1979 FRAZETTA CALENDAR

For keeping time in 79! Now Warren unveils a fabulous Frazetta collection of posters & paintings to grace this 1979 calendar! Here's 12 fantastic full color reproductions of the master of fantastic art which are suitable for framing and saving when the month is over. And there is an extra bonus! Included is a double page centerfold in full color! All the reproductions are on quality stock! #26096/\$4.95



## SCIENCE FICTION FULL COLOR POSTERS



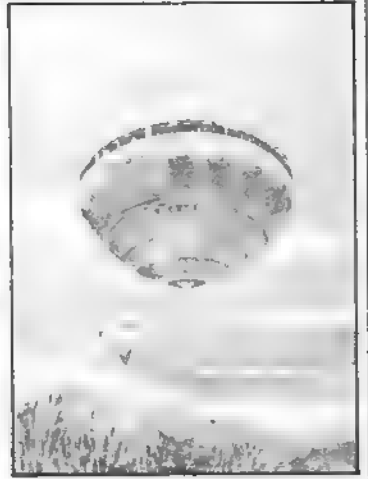
**GREEN BRAIN** A hive intelligence unleashes it's armies on an unsuspecting Earth! 22"x35". All in full color! #29003/\$2.50



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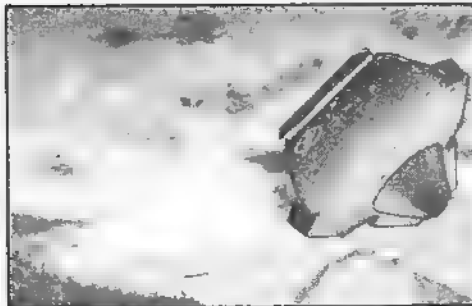
**THE SURVIVOR** The star lost fight for survival on a world lost to the ken of man! 22"x35". All in full color! #29007/\$2.50



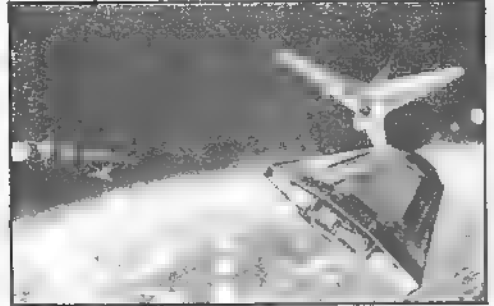
**CHILDREN OF TOMORROW** Oh! What glorious mysteries await our children's progeny! 22"x35". All in full color! #29009/\$2.50



**BATTLE OF THE GALAXIES** Space battles erupt as defending craft are blasted into smithereens by voracious aliens of the rim! Big 22"x35"! All in full color! #2999/\$2.50



**THOSE WHO WATCH** An enormous alien craft hovers mysteriously above a multi-mooned & lovely world, a sun rises in a sapphire sky! Big 22"x35"! All in full color! #29001/\$2.50



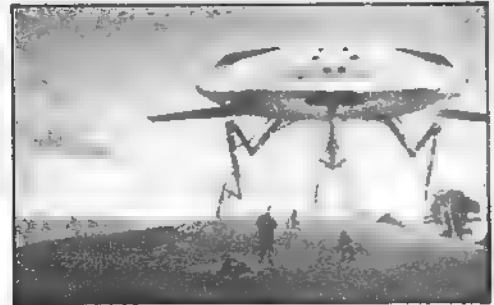
**EARTH ENSLAVED** The Earth is engirdled by a matrix of golden pentahedrons! An enslavement which brings our childhood to an end! Big 22"x35"! All in full color! #29002/\$2.50



**PLANET OF THE BLIND** Blasting off from the stellar central spaceport, ships climb a fiery column of star reaching flame! Big 22"x35"! All in full color! #29004/\$2.50



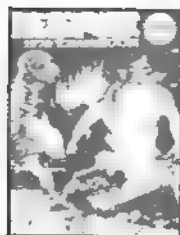
**JEWEL OF JAHREN** A diamond yellow sun set in an emerald sky is eclipsed by a spaceship of unknown origin and purpose! Death? Big 22"x35"! All in full color! #29006/\$2.50



**BRAIN WAVE** A beautiful visualization from Poul Anderson's book in which the I.Q. of every living thing on Earth rises greatly! Big 22"x35"! All in full color! #29008/\$2.50

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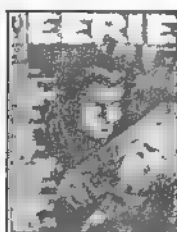
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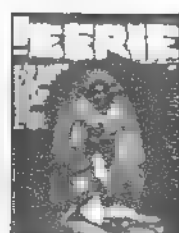
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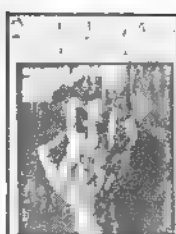
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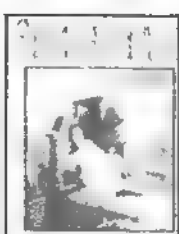
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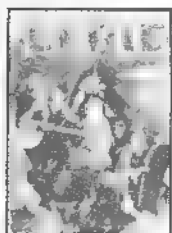
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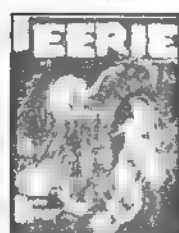
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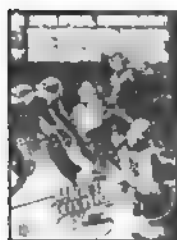


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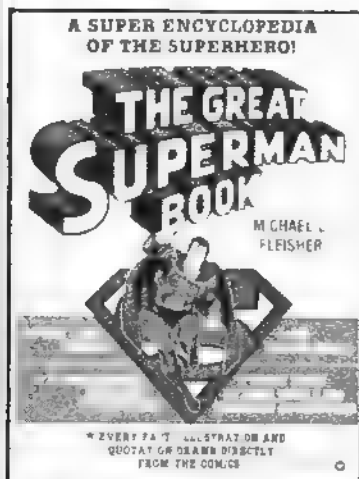
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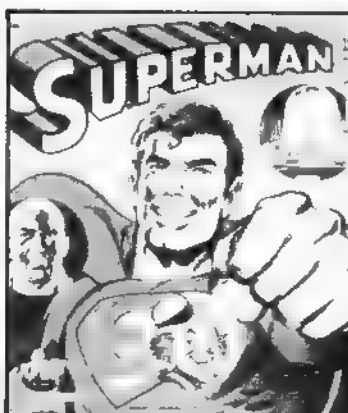


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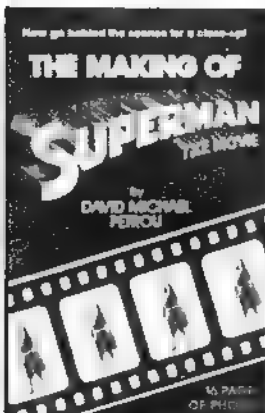
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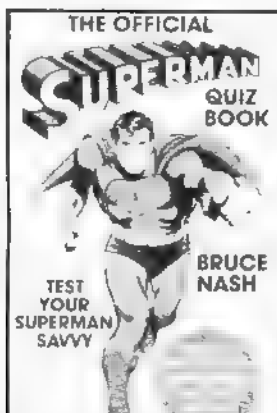
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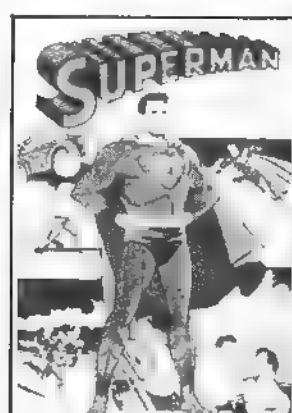
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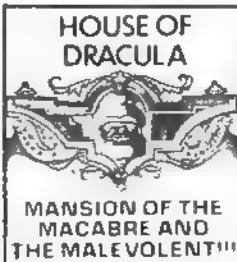
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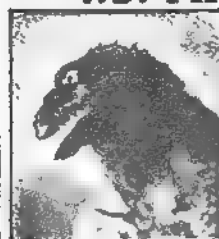
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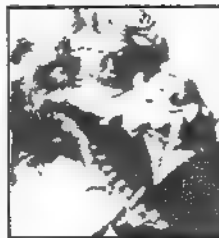
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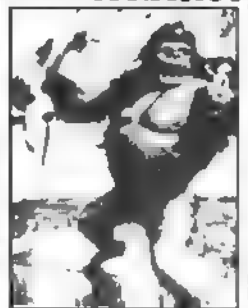
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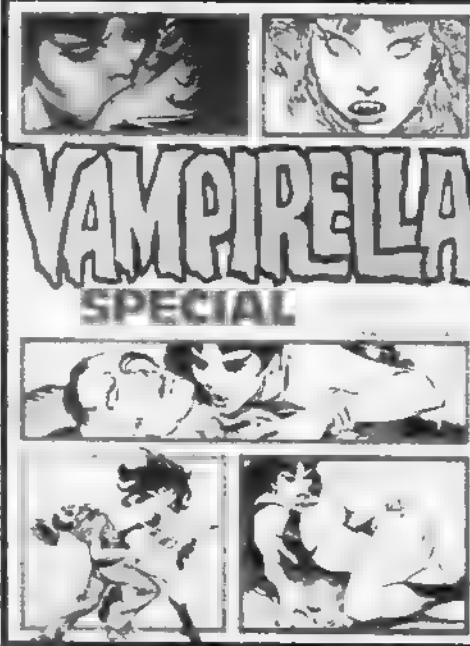
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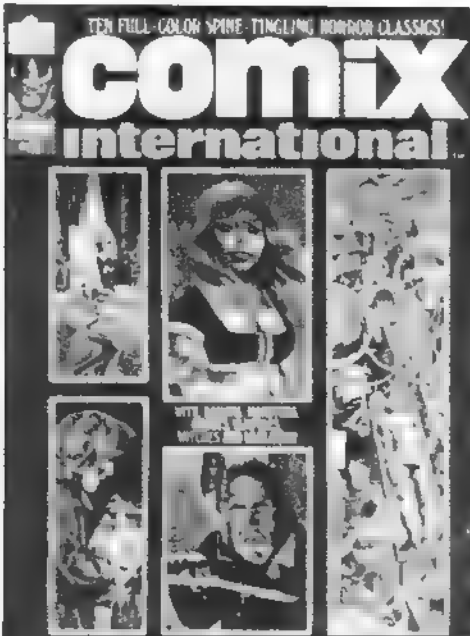
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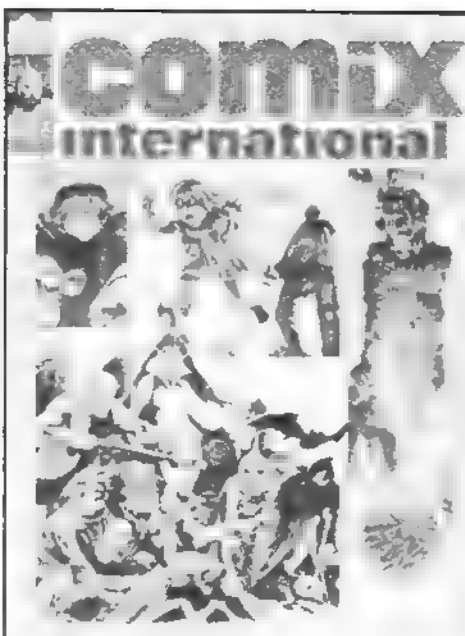
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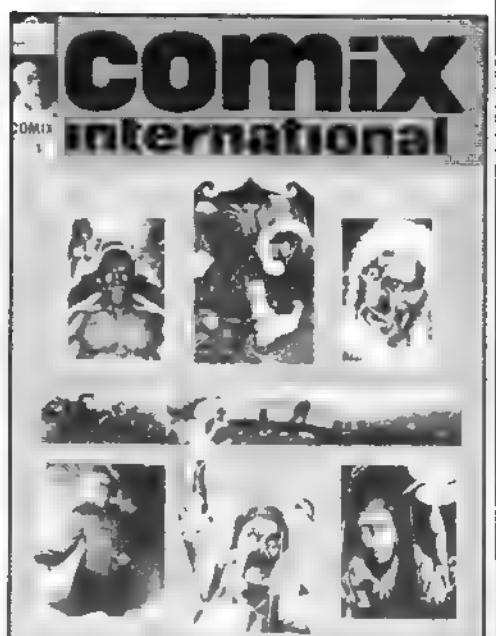
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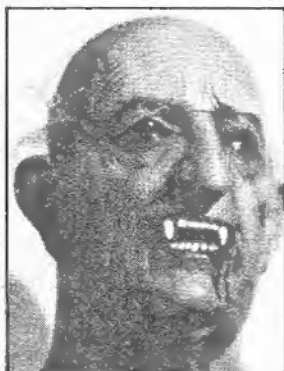


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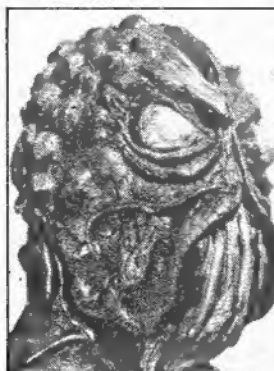


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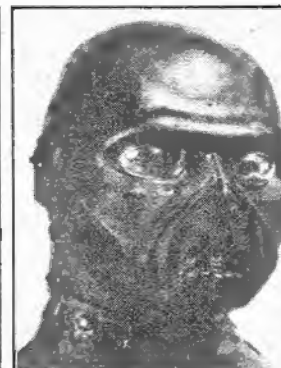
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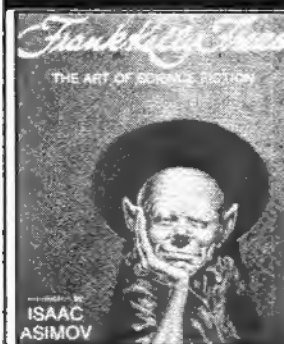


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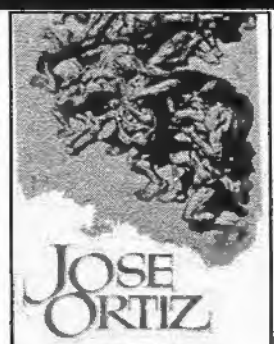


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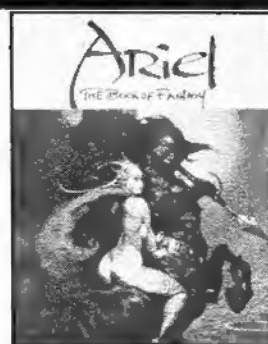
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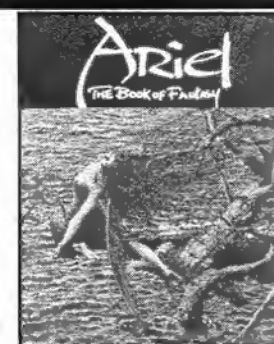
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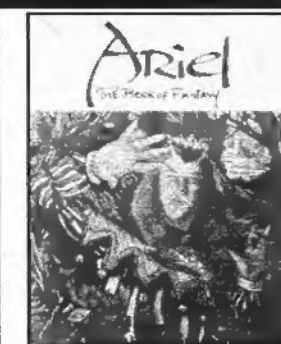
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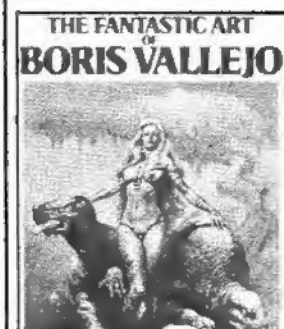
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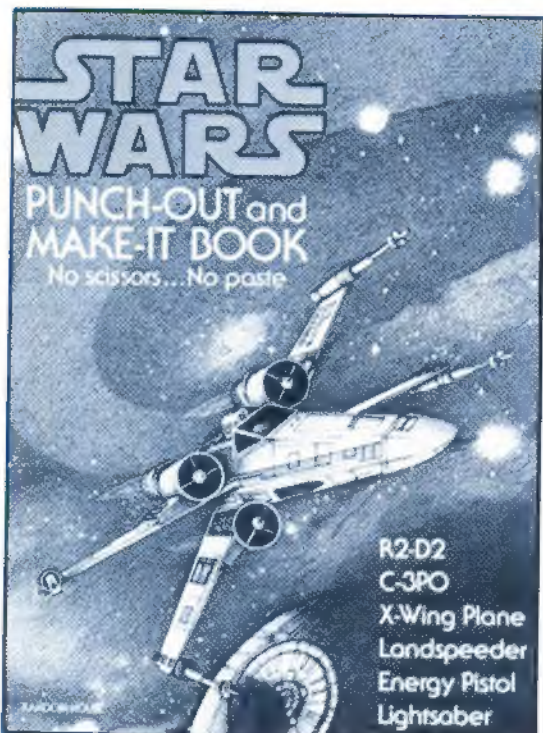
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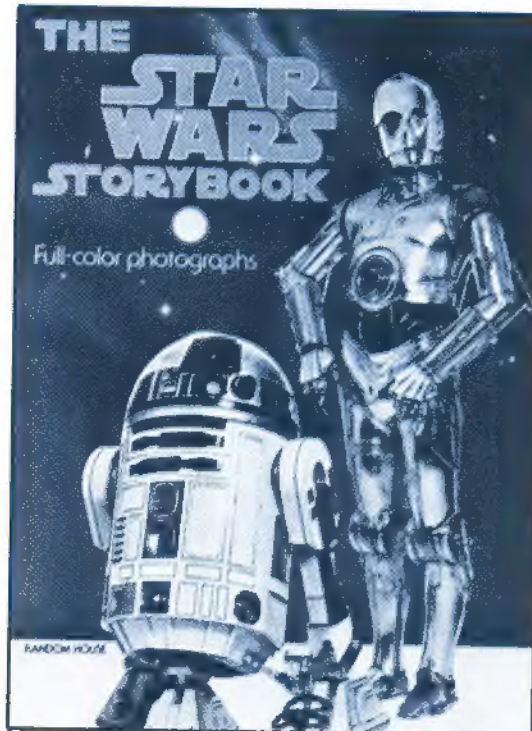
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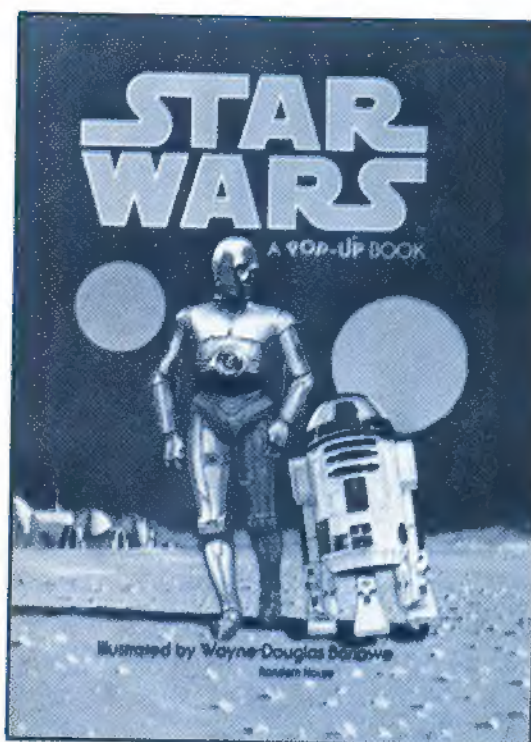
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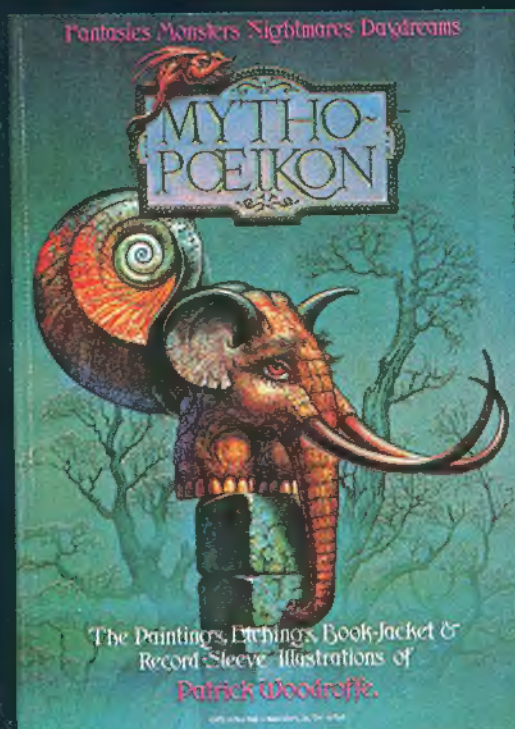
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